LORD OF THE MYSTERIES

by Cuttlefish That Loves Diving

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LORD OF
THE MYSTERIES

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- BOOK 5 -

-AUTHOR-
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[Atlas Studios (Webnovel)]

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CHAPTER 401
DIVINE EPIPHANY

Backlund, in a basement that resembled a temple.

Mr. A, dressed in a hooded black robe, motionlessly quietly knelt in front of a figurine of The Hanged Giant for an extended period of time.

Suddenly, he pricked up his ears as if he was listening to something.

After a short pause, Mr. A's hands jerked up, and he snapped his right index finger with his left palm.

He stuffed the bloody finger into his mouth and munched on it like he was eating snacks, making crunching sounds.

Gulp!

Mr. A's throat wiggled, and he swallowed his gnawed fingers into his stomach.

His body suddenly trembled, as if he was being grabbed and shaken by an invisible figure.

In this state, Mr. A stretched out his right hand and used the blood from his wound to write words on the ground.

Those words were written in neither Jotun or Dragonese, which could stir the powers of nature, nor was it in Hermes which was used for sacrificial rituals. Instead, they were written in the most ordinary and commonplace language, Loen.

The scarlet color quickly gathered together and the words pieced together into a few sentences.

"Found:

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era.

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog.

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck.

"Adorers and devotees in Backlund."

After the end of the "divine epiphany," Mr. A stopped trembling, and a new finger grew out of his squirming wound.

He lowered his head and carefully read the words he had just written, the corners of his mouth curled up in the shadows.

"By your divine revelation!" Mr. A humbly prostrated as though he had found the meaning of his existence once again.

…

City of Silver, at the top of the spire.

Lovia walked to the window and looked down at the candlelight in the darkness, her expression softening.

After an unknown period of time, she heard a knock at the door.

"Your Excellency?" Lovia turned around with alacrity and greeted the visitor with a smile.

The door opened backward automatically.

The person standing outside was none other than Demon Hunter Colin Iliad. He was draped with a brown coat and a leather belt with secret compartments around his waist.

"Lovia, the abnormality of the exploratory team has been verified," Colin described plainly. "As captain, regardless of your condition, you have to stay in the dungeon for three days and undergo the Glory Crown's cleansing. You should know that this is the rule."

Lovia didn't show the slightest hint of anger as she calmly smiled.

"I know, I've already made preparations to stay in the dungeon for a long time. When it's over, I can accept any arrangements even if you guys still don't trust me."

As she spoke, she had walked to the door and went past Demon Hunter Colin while facing him.

Colin turned silently and followed her down the winding steps.

Halfway there, they heard heart-wrenching cries and shouts.

"Is it starting again?" Lovia asked with a slightly confused expression.

Collin nodded and replied in a low voice, "Yes, this is a destiny that we can't escape from…”

At this moment, in a large hall in the middle levels of the spire.

The members of the exploratory team and the few residents of the City of Silver who had been corrupted were pressed down to the ground by seemingly corporeal holy lusters. They were unable to move, as though they were carrying a huge mountain on their backs.

A couple in their forties with dark skin held a sword with complicated patterns as they walked up to a young man in his early twenties.

The young man's body had already turned into a meat slush, but his head was still intact. Only a long, thin, blood-red tendril grew out of it.

Seeing the couple approaching, he shouted in horror, "Dad, Mom, what are you doing?

"Didn't we agree to eat grilled iron scorpions together tonight?

"Dad, Mom, I caught a lot of iron scorpions for you…”

The couple couldn't bear it any longer and turned their heads to the side, but they raised the sword in their hands high into the air…

After two stabbing sounds rang out, the young man stopped his wailing. He twitched first, then he completely lost all signs of life.

Elsewhere, a young girl, who was around ten years old, raised a sword with complicated patterns on it. Tears were streaming down her face as she stabbed her elder sister.

The girl lying on the ground suddenly laughed and gently said, "From today onwards, you'll have to live your own life. Don't be naive anymore…”

The girl immediately cried until her vision turned into a blur, and the sword in her hand stopped in midair.

However, a strong palm pressed the back of her hand, pushing it forward.

Oof!

The girl was left stunned, as though she couldn't hear or see anything.

This was the ancient curse that everyone in the City of Silver was under. They had to kill their own blood relatives to prevent them from turning into terrifying and strange evil spirits after their deaths.

Therefore, even though Darc had completely mutated into a monster and was corrupted by an unknown existence, having no value in interrogating, the "shadow" observer didn't dare to kill him on the spot. Instead, he tried his best to restrain the monster and bring it back to the spire to wait for his parents. Otherwise, the situation would only become worse.

The exploratory team members were currently receiving the same treatment that they had been subjected to, a process that remained unchanging for more than two thousand years. Although no one knew if they would mutate after dying in this state, no one dared to gamble on it.

Fortunately, the City of Silver didn't have a large population, and all of them lived in the same area. Under the arrangements of the upper echelons for each generation, there were quite a few people who were related to each other by blood. Even if they were limited by three generations, they would still be able to find quite a few.

Because of this, the Beyonder in charge of setting up a patrol team would first have to consider the matter of blood ties in order to prevent any unexpected situations from occurring.

The requirements for exploratory teams weren't that strict because their missions were always to invade deep into the darkness and stay far away from the City of Silver. Even if they died or mutated, it wouldn't affect everyone's safety.

Once a resident no longer had blood relatives within three generations, they would be placed under strict surveillance, and as soon as he became seriously ill or visibly aged, he would be exiled into the depths of darkness, away from the City of Silver.

When the previous captain of the exploratory team, Uddel, was isolated in the dungeon, there were actually three elders in the spire. However, the one who took action was Chief Colin Iliad in the end. Otherwise, they could only attempt a seal.

This was because Uddel was the elder brother of his direct kin.

Shepherd Lovia and Demon Hunter Colin silently entered the bottom level of the spire. Accompanied by a few Dawn Paladins, they arrived at the depths of the dungeon.

Soon, both of them stopped outside a cell. The Dawn Paladins dispersed themselves a distance away.

Without any abnormalities, she walked into a room with a single bed, a table, and a single candle at a moderate pace.

Before the metal door closed, she turned around and looked at Demon Hunter Colin with her pale gray eyes.

"Your Excellency, you once told me that when residents of the City of Silver leave this place and die in the depths of the darkness, they won't immediately turn into evil spirits. A few days have to pass. Therefore, the other members of the exploratory team have plenty of time to pull open a distance from them."

Colin nodded and expressed his agreement.

Lovia closed her eyes, revealing a sad smile, "In an exploration two months ago, a team member died in front of me.

"I pretended to be separated from the rest of the team. I waited there for five days, but he didn't turn into an evil spirit."

Demon Hunter Colin looked at her in silence, not saying anything until the metal door closed with a clang, and the seal took shape.

…

In the ancient palace above the fog.

After waiting for a while, Klein was finally relieved when he saw that there were no changes to the crimson star which symbolized Little Sun.

He should have succeeded… He rubbed his temples, wrapped his spirituality around his body, and descended back to the real world.

As soon as he felt the presence of his body, Klein experienced the bitter cold.

He sneezed, then he quickly removed the wall of spirituality and crawled back into bed.

Sadly, his bed was already ice-cold.

Fortunately, my body receives a certain degree of protection after entering the gray fog; otherwise, I would probably catch a cold tomorrow… Klein wrapped himself tightly with his blanket and sighed.

The current state he was in reminded him of a joke he had heard in his previous life.

Warmth is basically gained by vibration.…

Before his bed warmed up again, he could only let his mind wander as he thought about all sorts of matters.

*Yes, there are no pressing matters for me recently. The Magician's rules have been concluded. Even if I don't challenge the impossible and only engage in "acting" normally, I should be able to digest the potions around New Year's. My next task is to collect the Beyonder ingredients for the Faceless potion and save up the necessary funds. But that's not something I can rush… *The taut strings in Klein's mind gradually softened, and he suddenly had the thought of resting for two to three days.

As the bed warmed, he fell asleep without realizing it. When he woke up, he heard the church bells ringing eight times.

Klein stretched out his arm, felt the cold, and silently withdrew it.

*It seems to have turned colder again today… Since there's nothing pertinent to do, it seems I can just continue sleeping in… *Relaxed, he closed his eyes again.

But after a while, he heard his stomach growling and felt the bulge in his lower abdomen.

Life is full of hard choices.… Klein mumbled.

After ten minutes or so of struggling between the two feelings, he finally gave up, got up, and rushed to the bathroom next door.

After changing his clothes and washing up, he went down to the first floor and took out some ingredients to cook Feynapotter noodles.

This time, he didn't intend to use the meat sauce that he bought, but instead, he wanted to try the meat paste he had made two days ago. This was the meat paste he had carefully chosen from the ingredients based on his memories. Although there were ultimately differences in the ingredients between the two worlds, preventing him from fully replicating the authentic taste, Klein still found it pretty good after sampling it.

It wasn't long before he had a bowl of Feynapotter noodles with condiments and meat paste, He found it a really wonderful morning.

Keeping in with the tradition of this world, he browsed through the newspapers as he ate, and he checked if Eye of Wisdom had placed an advertisement first.

Based on his late night thoughts from yesterday, Klein decided to have some fun today, so he considered whether he should go to a concert, an opera, or a play.

*The tickets to many of the music halls in the West Borough, Hillston Borough, and Cherwood Borough are at least six soli, and if it's a famous musician, then they would even be on the order of pounds. Music halls specially catered to commonfolk range from six to nine pence. Those that are open to the poor with money to spare in East Borough only need one pence… *Klein flipped through the relevant materials to select his choice of entertainment for the day.

At that moment, he heard the doorbell ring.

Ding dong.

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CHAPTER 402
DIGGING

Who is it? Klein jerked his head up to look at the door.

He felt as if he were suffering from an illness; the fear of hearing the doorbell ring was identical to the symptoms he had experienced on Earth—being afraid of his cell phone's ringing.

Putting down the newspaper and magazine, he looked at the empty plate which had been cleaned even of its seasonings, then he stood up, and he walked to the door.

Before he got a hold of the handle, he already knew that it was Dr. Aaron outside.

Don't you need to work? Klein mumbled as he opened the door.

"Good morning, Aaron. The fog is gray today." He smiled.

Aaron was still wearing his cold expression, but there was an additional sense of anxiety and fear written on his face.

He nudged his gold-rimmed spectacles and, without bothering to greet him, bluntly said, "Sherlock, I had another dream! I dreamed of Will Auceptin again!"

Ah? Klein almost froze.

That's not right? The real paper crane is with me, above the gray fog, while the one I folded is with the Nighthawks. You're still able to dream of Will

Auceptin with a paper crane which was poorly folded by a Nighthawk? That's not scientific, no—that's not mystic… Klein became serious and asked, "The same dream?"

"No, it's not that scary this time." Aaron became a little calmer. "I dreamed about the Grimm Cemetery. You know of it, right?"

"Yes," Klein answered simply.

Back then, he had caught a group of students and a mysticism enthusiast who was a complete beginner, Kapusky, engaging in a spiritual dance outside Grimm Cemetery. He later received another copper whistle from the latter which could be used to summon a messenger.

Aaron drew a deep breath of cold air and continued, "I dreamed of the woods outside Grimm Cemetery. I dreamed of a birch tree which had a layer of bark peeled off its trunk, Will Auceptin was sitting underneath that tree, looking at me quietly."

"And then?" Klein pressed.

Aaron shook his head. "The dream ended there."

What a strange matter… Has Dr. Aaron's dream got nothing to do with the paper crane? No, if it wasn't related, then there wouldn't have been a situation where the dream changed after the paper crane was switched. Furthermore, I also performed a divination using the paper crane above the gray fog and obtained the corresponding revelations… Klein said in a measured voice, "This is no longer within my scope of understanding. What do you want from me, Aaron?"

Aaron breathed out warm air that dispersed into white mist. "I want to pay a visit to the area outside Grimm Cemetery. I want to do it now, while it's still daytime. Can you protect me? I'll pay you one pound."

Heading over to the place that appeared in the dream now? He probably wouldn't encounter anything too strange during the day… Klein thought for a moment and said, "I can accept this request, but I suggest that you go back to the same cathedral and tell your dream to the bishop you're familiar with."

Aaron agreed, then said doubtfully, "Why do you always suggest that I go to the cathedral? I know, you've explained it before, in a very logical way, that if mystical powers exist in this world, then the Churches, which have been leading humanity, must be the ones with the strongest mystical powers, and if there are none, then at least we can go to the Church to get psychological comfort and corresponding connections. However, why do you suggest that I go to the cathedral for something that isn't considered too strange?"

Klein considered for two seconds, then replied seriously, "I'm a detective. I've come into contact with a lot of unusual things, so I understand the special nature of the Church. I also know when to ask for help."

"Really?" Aaron listened with a serious expression.

The corners of Klein's mouth curled up.

"Just kidding.

"Take it easy, Aaron. I'm going to change my clothes first. Uh, and also do the dishes."

Having chatted with Aaron at the door for a long time without his thick coat, he turned rather stiff from the cold winds.

Taking this opportunity, Klein went to the washroom, went above the gray fog, and divined the degree of danger for this mission. He received the answer that there was almost no risk.

If he received a revelation indicating that it was dangerous, his plan was to reject the mission using the Church of the Evernight Goddess as an excuse.

…

Hillston Borough, Myriad Star Cathedral.

"Sherlock, why don't you hire a maid? As a great detective, you can afford to have several servants," Aaron asked, as he led Klein to the Church of the Evernight Goddess's largest cathedral in Hillston Borough.

This was something that he had wanted to ask while in the carriage, but he had never found the opportunity to change the subject.

Klein sighed, and said heavily, "Aaron, let me tell you a story. There was a detective who hired two maids, a cook, and an assistant, and he was doing pretty well, but one day he took over a case and successfully homed in on the murderer, who was a very savage and cruel man. He sneaked into the detective's house with the intention of revenge.

"The detective was a fighting expert, and in the end, he was only slightly injured, but two of his servants died because of him.

"Do you get it, Aaron?"

"I see," Aaron's voice had a hint of empathy. "Sherlock, I never knew that you've had such an experience."

No, the main character has nothing to do with me. I just made up a story… It's not like I can tell you directly that I'm involved in many strange and mystical matters, and that there will always be unspeakable secrets in my house so that it's best I don't hire any servants… Klein looked forward and let out a long sigh.

The cleaning of his home was done twice a week, mostly by Mrs. Stelyn Sammer's maid. She was responsible for the most basic cleaning

procedures, and each cleaning cost one soli.

While they were talking, the two of them had already entered the hall of the Myriad Star Cathedral.

It was dark, quiet, and devoid of candles, completely in line with the Church of the Evernight Goddess's style.

At the very front of the hall was an altar engraved with a Dark Sacred Emblem. The stars were inlaid with self-illuminating pearls, and the crimson moon was made of rubies. The rest of the hall was filled with the darkness of the night.

With a single glance, he could see that the place was filled with specks of light as the crimson light illuminated the area, making the place extremely sacred.

But Klein felt that this was inferior to the design used by Saint Selena Cathedral in Tingen. That hall was pitch-black, with only light penetrating from the front through the fist-sized holes. It resembled a star sky, making one feel awe from the bottom of one's heart.

However, there's a problem with that kind of design. At night, the effect would be gone… Klein took a seat at random, took off his half top hat and leaned on his black hardwood cane, while Aaron continued down the aisle to the confessional in search of the bishop.

Sitting in such a large hall and looking at the people who were concentrating on praying, Klein's heart suddenly became tranquil.

Come to think of it, this is only my third time entering the Goddess's cathedral… He let out a self-deprecating laugh.

…

Inside the Cathedral of Serenity at Winter County.

Leonard Mitchell put on his black windbreaker and red gloves and entered the room of the high-ranking deacon, Crestet Cesimir.

"Congratulations, you have officially become a Red Glove. May the Goddess bless you." Cesimir drew a crimson moon on his chest.

He still had his mouth covered with his high collar.

"Praise the Lady. The honor is mine." Leonard raised his right hand and gestured four points in a clockwise fashion.

Cesimir didn't say anything else and went straight to the point.

"According to your request, I've placed you in Soest's team. He's a Soul Assurer and possesses a mystical item. I've already ordered someone to prepare a Beyonder weapon for you that you'll need.

"Your team will be in charge of a devil summoning case, and you'll take into consideration certain clues to perform the search. For example, cases that have happened consecutively in Backlund and matters related to a tarot ritual."

"Yes, Reverend Cesimir." Leonard held no objections towards the mission.

This will be the beginning of my revenge… he silently said to himself.

…

West Borough, in the periphery of Grimm Cemetery.

Klein accompanied Dr. Aaron as they took quite a while to walk around the nearby woods, coughing from time to time as a result of the falling grayish-white dust.

"Maybe there isn't a tree like that. Dreams can't fully reflect reality." Towards the end of the search, even Aaron was feeling a little uncertain

himself.

Fortunately, I'm good at finding things… Klein pointed with his cane and said, "Let's take a look over there and make it our final effort."

"Alright." Aaron gasped for a breath of air.

After a short walk, Aaron suddenly stopped and said, while pointing diagonally ahead, "Over there, over there!"

About a dozen meters away, a birch tree with a strip of bark around its trunk stripped off stood there quietly, as if it were waiting for them.

"It's identical to the one in my dream," Aaron said with conviction.

Klein smiled and said with some vigilance, "But there's no Will Auceptin."

Aaron got close to the birch tree, frowned for a while, then he suddenly pointed to the side of the tree and said, "Back then, Will Auceptin was sitting here, and he was pointing at the mud below him with his finger!"

Pointing at the mud below him? Klein stood at the side, looking down at the almost unwithered grass.

"You want to dig it up?"

Aaron nodded. "We've already found this place, so we should confirm what's here. Sherlock, go to the cemetery and borrow two shovels."

"It's better if I stay here. You go to the cemetery, I'm worried something might happen to you," Klein said cautiously.

"Alright." Aaron didn't refuse, and he immediately left the forest.

After a while, after offering some money, he returned with three shovels and a tomb keeper, and they began to dig.

While Klein was digging, he suddenly smelled something familiar. As the soil on the surface parted, the things below were gradually exposed.

It was the body of a child that was already greatly rotten!

His skin and flesh looked as if they were about to melt, and many bugs crawled in and out of his nose and mouth.

Clang!

The shovel fell from Aaron's hand and hit a rock.

He pointed to the legs of the corpse, his mouth moving frantically but he was unable to say a word.

Klein endured the nausea and looked closely, discovering that the child's left leg was obviously missing its lower half.

At the same time, Aaron took two steps back and fell to the ground, shouting sharply, "Will Auceptin! Will Auceptin!"

It was Will Auceptin's corpse!

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CHAPTER 403
THE FATE OF A PRIVATE DETECTIVE

He's dead?

Will Auceptin is dead?

And he seems to have been dead for some time!

Could this be fake?

Klein looked at the body of the child in surprise and suspicion as many thoughts bubbled in his mind.

From what he knew, Will Auceptin was a special child who could be involved with a Sequence 1 of the Monster pathway, Snake of Mercury, in some way.

In the divination game he played, a casual "Doctor, your luck will get worse" was enough to make Aaron suffer from bad luck for an extended period of time. The paper crane he folded allowed Aaron's Astral Projection to be located in the spirit world and be instilled with artificial revelations. Even above the gray fog, Klein only received an inkling of his location and couldn't come to an effective conclusion… How could such a child die for no reason? He was dead before Dr. Aaron's dreams? What about his family?

Klein narrowed his eyes, and despite his intense nausea, he carefully examined the highly rotten body. He noticed some torn tarot cards in the

surrounding soil.

His spiritual intuition told him that the corpse in front of him was most likely Will Auceptin.

It's really shocking and difficult to understand… I should go above the gray fog later and confirm if it's a fake death from Will Auceptin… Wait, what does this have to do with me? I had already decided not to get involved in this matter any further, in case I get entangled by some Snake of Mercury. This might be even more terrifying than Sealed Artifact 0-08… Klein snapped out of his daze and said to the terrified tomb keeper and Dr. Aaron, who was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

"Call the police!"

"Okay! Okay!" The tomb keeper was taken aback at first before he repeated his reply.

With the shovel in hand, he turned and ran out of the woods, at a speed that was so fast that it appeared as though he was being chased by a zombie.

As expected, he's just an ordinary person and isn't cautious at all. In this kind of situation, shouldn't he be wary of the people around him who might have malicious intent? By exposing your back, it would be easy for you to be hit by a shovel… Klein glanced at the back of the tomb keeper and shook his head with a sigh.

When he was a Nighthawk in Tingen, he had read a lot of case files and found out that many of the victims had ended up becoming victims of their companions.

Thinking of this, Klein walked to Dr. Aaron, bent down, and stretched out his hand.

"There's nothing to be afraid of. He's already dead."

“…It's the death that scares me." Aaron calmed down a bit, and without accepting Klein's help, he got up by himself.

His black frock coat was covered with dirt, and Klein felt his heart pain for the clothes for some baffling reason.

I'm the kind of person who can't stand seeing anything valuable get damaged… He inwardly sighed with emotion.

Noticing that Aaron was still panicking, Klein laughed and said, "At such times, praying to the deity you believe in has quite a remarkable effect."

"Is that so?" Aaron was stunned. He tapped his chest four times in a clockwise manner and chanted softly, "The Evernight Goddess is nobler than the stars and more eternal than eternity. Your devout believer prays for your blessing…”

After repeating this over and over again, he gradually calmed down, no longer feeling as terrified as before.

Klein drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest and silently whispered to himself, *God of Steam and Machinery, your completely unfaithful believer is begging for your blessings…*

As he spoke, he couldn't help but laugh at himself, suspecting that he might be smote to death by lightning on the spot.

However, lightning and thunder belong to the Lord of Storms, and it isn't in the domain of the God of Steam and Machinery… Klein thought in a relaxed manner.

After about 20 minutes, the two of them found themselves sitting in an interrogation room at a nearby police station.

During the testimony, Klein frankly informed the police that he was a private investigator who wasn't too sure of what was happening. As for Dr.

Aaron, he described his dream in detail as the reason for digging to find the body.

Klein could tell that the police didn't believe him at all, but after they had gone out for a while, they immediately changed their attitudes, saying that there was nothing suspicious about Dr. Aaron and Detective Moriarty. All they had to do was sign their statements and leave.

Aaron was surprised, but Klein wasn't surprised. It was obvious that the Nighthawks had been involved.

The advantage of having the doctor head to the Myriad Star Cathedral in advance was demonstrated.

Before leaving the police station, Klein wasn't surprised to see a familiar figure. It was the Nighthawk who had entered his dream earlier.

The man on duty, who was probably a captain, was still wearing a gray windbreaker and was obviously more resistant to the cold than Klein. His blue eyes swept past Klein's face without any signs of abnormality, pretending to be an ordinary senior inspector.

Klein, who was also pretending to be an ordinary private detective, nudged his glasses, put on half top hat, and left the station with Dr. Aaron in a carriage.

After instructing his carriage driver to head to Minsk Street first, Aaron turned to Klein and said, "Sherlock, do you think this will be the end of it?"

"If that body really belongs to Will Auceptin, then you shouldn't be troubled any longer." Klein paused and continued, "Aaron, have you found anything else that's strange during this period of time? Regardless of what it is."

Aaron thought about it and shook his head.

"No."

"This is worth celebrating!" Klein sighed and said with a smile.

To him, this was the best way things could end with Will Auceptin's matter. Although the paper crane Klein had folded above the gray fog wouldn't reveal anything, and there would be no problems with any divination afterward, he was still a little worried that some Nighthawk would suddenly think of something and use it to find some clues. And now, with the death of Will Auceptin, the case might soon reach a dead end, put in the archives, and temporarily declared a closed case. No one would pay any more attention to it without any new developments.

Aaron relaxed and asked suspiciously, "Frankly, I don't think my statement was very convincing. Why did the cops choose to believe it in the end?"

"I don't know either," Klein feigned puzzlement and said, "I thought I'd have to get my lawyer to take me home again—No, bail me out."

Aaron smirked and said, "Sherlock, you seem to have a lot of experience in being sent to the police station?"

Klein laughed and replied in a deep voice, "It's the fate of every private detective."

…

Just as Klein and Aaron were being taken to the police station near Grimm Cemetery, Fors Wall was wearing a long black dress and a black bonnet with a fine mesh hanging down. She entered the silent cemetery and found the grave of Mrs. Aulisa.

She and Xio had gone to Empress Borough an hour ago to visit Viscount Glaint, and they had successfully gotten a verbal agreement for borrowing 400 pounds without any interest.

Viscount Glaint's only request was that the two Beyonders accompany him to the gathering Mr. A would convene tonight to ensure his safety. He was

anxious to procure a Royal Jellyfish's venom crystal so that he could complete the concoction of the Apothecary potion.

Audrey had found the horn of an adult Flying Unicorn in the family treasury, and she had taken one out in the name of doing a biological experiment, effectively offsetting part of her debt.

She also put forward an additional condition for Viscount Glaint to get the help of Duke Negan's children to confirm if the dragon specimens in the treasury had a Thousand-faced Hunter and whether there were still light dots flashing inside.

When the loan was settled, Fors was in no hurry to pray to Mr. Fool to close the deal as quickly as possible, because it would make Xio intuitively turn suspicious if things developed too quickly.

Taking advantage of her free time, she changed her clothes and rented a horse carriage to get to Grimm Cemetery, which was located on the outskirts of West Borough.

Knowing the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation and Indestructibility, Fors realized that the main ingredient that turned her into an Apprentice was the Beyonder characteristic left behind by Mrs. Aulisa. In a way, she had inherited her powers.

Therefore, she couldn't help but pay a visit and put a bouquet of flowers in front of Mrs. Aulisa's grave and thank her.

It was early winter, and most of the flowers had long since withered, but Fors still bought a handful of plain flowers.

These flowers were grown in a greenhouse and were quite expensive.

*Thank you, Emperor Roselle, for your invention… *Fors said inwardly in a most sincere manner.

As far as she knew, most of the flowers that the nobles used for their winter banquets came from greenhouses, while a tiny portion was delivered directly from the warm south by airships. This was more than the average middle-class worker could bear.

Standing in front of the black tombstone, Fors took a deep look at the photograph of Mrs. Aulisa before bending down to lay down the flowers and whispered, "Thank you."

She immediately straightened up, closed her eyes, and quietly recalled the past.

At this moment, she heard a slightly aged voice.

"You really are a good and kind-hearted lady."

Fors opened her eyes and turned her head, realizing that Mr. Lawrence, from the Abraham family, had also appeared there at some point. He was also holding a bouquet of plain but elegant flowers in his hand.

"No, this is not goodness, nor is it kindness. Mrs. Aulisa once gave me, a person who had lost her mother, an unforgettable period of warmth," Fors said sincerely.

Her eyes were suddenly moist.

Lawrence, who only had wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, put down the flowers and sighed.

"This shows that you value relationships."

After chatting for a while, when Fors was about to leave, Lawrence, who was waving her goodbye, suddenly began to cough violently.

Cough! Cough! Cough!

He coughed until his legs buckled and fell to the ground. It seemed as if he would die at any moment from suffocation.

As a doctor who had graduated from an accredited school, Fors didn't hesitate to turn around, crouch down, and begin performing first aid.

After a while, Lawrence's condition finally stabilized. He wiped the saliva from the corner of his mouth and smiled at Fors.

"Lady, can you take me back to the hotel?"

"No problem." Fors helped him to his feet.

Lawrence looked ahead, his eyes a little out of focus. He coughed lightly, and he said with a sad and self-deprecating laugh, "My life might be coming to an end…”

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CHAPTER 404
ENTRUST

West Borough, Carlpensa Hotel.

Fors helped Lawrence into his room and laid him down on the bed.

It was a rather luxurious hotel, with thick, soft, grayish-yellow carpets everywhere except the washroom. On the walls hung imitations of famous oil paintings.

Lawrence gasped for air and said, "Thank you, Miss Wall, and please forgive a dying man for not being able to bow."

"No, Mr. Lawrence, your problem has eased. As a former medical doctor, I can tell you without a doubt that you can still live. After some rest, we'll go to a clinic or a hospital," Fors consoled him.

Lawrence smiled. "I know my physical condition very well. You don't have to comfort me. Besides, I'm an amateur astrologer. I already had a premonition that I'm going to die in this hotel in Backlund."

Aside from some superficial concealment, everything he said was the truth. He was already close to eighty, and he was no longer that robust and spirited young man from before. If not for the Sequence potions that elevated his constitution, he might have already been buried in some random cemetery.

Originally, Lawrence thought he could live for another ten years, but who would have thought that he would encounter a rebellion caused by the

former Traveler Botis. He suffered relatively serious injuries at the hands of the Aurora Order, and his remaining descendants all died in that disaster.

This dealt him a great blow, and he almost didn't manage to recover from it. The search for his brothers and their descendants in Backlund had only resulted in him receiving news of their deaths, dealing him a significant blow to his mental wellbeing once more.

Compounded by all these things, Lawrence clearly felt that his life had come to an end.

His initial plan was to return to the graves of Laubero and Aulisa again and present a bouquet of flowers. He would then return immediately and meet with the other members of the Elder Council to set things in order before his death, but being an elderly man, his condition was beyond his control.

Without waiting for a response from Fors, Lawrence struggled to retrieve a palm-sized notebook from the inside pocket of his half-open coat.

The hard paper cover of the notebook was bronze green, giving off a very ancient feeling.

On its surface, the words: "I came, I saw, I record" was written in ancient Feysac.

Lawrence placed the notebook on the quilt in front of his chest and took a deep breath.

"Miss. Wall, if I die here, can you help me send it to Pritz Harbor?"

"Mr. Lawrence, you'll be fine," Fors emphasized.

At the same time, she subconsciously glanced at the notebook and found that it wasn't thick at all. There were a total of three types of papers inside, one of which was a yellow type of parchment which had very few pages. The other was yellowish-brown goatskin and the number of pages was in

the middle of the range. The last was comprised of ordinary white paper and was the most common.

Lawrence laughingly said with great difficulty, "I mean, Miss. Wall, will you help?"

"Pritz Harbor isn't far. It's not even a trip. If it needs to be rushed, then I can even make the round trip in half a day by taking the steam locomotive." Fors nodded.

Lawrence breathed a sigh of relief as his mind seemed to recover a little.

"After I die, wait ten minutes. Retrieve the glowing object from my body, and then send it along with this notebook to Dorian Gray at the Pritz Harbor's Fishermen Association. The forty-two pounds in cash in my wallet will be the reward and my gratitude. As for these clothes of mine, let it turn to ash along with me."

"No, you don't need to give me anything. No, you'll be fine, Mr. Lawrence," Fors said earnestly.

As if he hadn't heard her, Lawrence whispered to himself, "Maybe Dorian will give you additional rewards, but it depends on you… I believe you. From Aulisa's matter, I can tell that you're a good girl…”

He suddenly seemed to turn lucid as he said to Fors, "Ms. Wall, can you go down to the first floor and bring me a jug of water? I don't know when the waiter will come over."

"No problem." Without thinking, Fors took a water jug and walked out of the room.

After walking a few steps, she suddenly felt that something was amiss. The water jug in her hand was heavy, and there was obviously a lot of water in it.

Just as she was about to turn around and ask, she suddenly sensed a strong fluctuation of spirituality in the room.

That was… For a moment Fors froze, and then she understood what Mr. Lawrence was trying to do.

As death approached, he could clearly sense that something was wrong with his body. He was afraid of losing control and turning into a monster.

He wanted to die as a human, not a monster, so he chose to end his own life.

That was the last form of decency for a Beyonder.

Of course, if he had turned into a monster, all his plans would have come to naught.

With this in mind, Fors became dejected. She waited outside for nearly ten minutes before she pushed open the door and entered.

She saw Lawrence lying silently on the bed, looking like he had aged considerably. Beside him was a "diamond" the size of an eye.

The light which shone in through the window was constantly refracted by the "diamond," forming a scene as beautiful as the radiance of the stars.

Fors sighed and performed a careful examination. She found that the cause of Lawrence's death was the most ordinary form of cardiac arrest.

…

Cherwood Borough. 15 Minsk Street.

Klein rested for a while after getting home. He then went above the gray fog, having plans to divine the situation with Will Auceptin.

He had the paper crane fly out of the trash pile in the corner and made it land on the long bronze table in front of him. Then, he took out the topaz pendant that was wrapped around his sleeve.

As he held the spirit pendulum in his left hand, Klein used Cogitation to adjust his condition before recalling the scenes he had seen in the woods outside the cemetery.

He might not have noticed some of the details, but it was certain that his spirituality wouldn't miss any. This divination was mainly about using this point and relying on the gray fog to eliminate all distractions.

After finishing his preparations, Klein took out a goatskin parchment and wrote the divination statement: "Will Auceptin is completely dead."

Then, he pressed the paper crane next to the divination sentence, almost causing the topaz pendant to touch the words.

After entering a state of Cogitation and completing all the steps of the spirit dowsing, Klein opened his eyes and looked at the result.

The topaz pendant was rotating counterclockwise at a fast frequency and high amplitude.

It was a negative result.

That meant that Will Auceptin wasn't completely dead!

This… Klein was surprised, but it seemed to be within his expectations.

He thought for a moment, then he changed the divination statement: "That corpse was Will Auceptin's."

This time, the spirit pendulum gave a positive result.

The body did belong to Will Auceptin!

An idea came to Klein's mind, and he wrote a new divination statement: "Will Auceptin's corpse will resurrect."

After a few moments of calmly performing the divination, Klein saw the revelation.

The pendulum was rotating counterclockwise with a fast frequency.

That meant that Will Auceptin's corpse wouldn't be resurrected; or in other words, no reanimations!

It looks like Will Auceptin had voluntarily or was forced to abandon his previous body, and he is surviving in another way… This matter has something to do with the Snake of Mercury? Klein tried to divine additional information, but he failed repeatedly, including the statement: "Will Auceptin's present state."

However, he repeated the divination using dream divination and inquired "Will Auceptin's current location." He received a similar scene: a dark room with the sound of running water.

However, the feeling it gave him seemed to be a little different.

*Forget it, there's no need to waste any more time on this. I'm not planning to get involved anyway… *Klein put away his spirit pendulum and prepared to return to the real world.

Through the prior divination and everything that had happened before, he had a theory about Will Auceptin, but he couldn't confirm it.

He suspected that Will Auceptin was another Snake of Mercury!

As a Sequence 1, a Snake of Mercury wasn't the only one. There could be up to three in existence at the same time!

The Snake of Fate, who wielded destiny naturally, could locate Aaron's Astral Projection through the paper crane and show him a false revelation. Without a doubt, it also had the ability to change a person's fate.

For some reason, Will Auceptin had become weak and was under the threat of the second Snake of Mercury. Everything he did was to escape his counterpart.

As for the reason for their conflict, the answer was simple.

Without a Sequence 0, there could be three Sequence 1s at the same time, but once there was a Sequence 0, there would be no Sequence 1s!

Regarding this sentence, the formula of the Dark Emperor potion clearly stated the truth.

One of the main ingredients of the recipe was: two Beyonder characteristics of a Prince of Disorder!

Prince of Disorder was Sequence 1 of the Dark Emperor pathway!

As a Sequence 1, if one wanted to advance to Sequence 0, then one had to obtain all the Beyonder characteristics of the other two Sequence 1s of the same pathway!

With this guess in mind, Klein was increasingly afraid of getting involved with Will Auceptin's case.

If my deduction is correct, it would be a genuine "fight between deities," and I can't afford to get myself involved… Klein's spirituality descended, and he disappeared from the ancient palace above the gray fog.

…

In Empress Borough, in an inconspicuous house, the Beyonder gathering organized by Mr. A proceeded as scheduled.

Fors and Xio had changed their clothes, and they accompanied Viscount Glaint, who was wearing an iron-black mask, into the hall. They randomly chose a seat and sat down.

Viscount Glaint wrote down his needs to the attendants before the gathering officially began. He also prayed to the goddess that there would be a response later.

As usual, Fors maintained her usual languidness and, in a rare instance, covered herself with a hood, concealing her face with the shadows.

She was thinking about the situation with Mr. Lawrence.

She knew very clearly what that "diamond" the size of an eye was. It was a Beyonder characteristic left behind by him. However, for the time being, she was unable to confirm what Sequence it belonged to.

Fors had casually flipped through the notebook, only to find that many of the pages were still blank. The written content was filled with all sorts of strange, odd, and mysterious symbols and magic labels, exceeding whatever she knew.

What it is isn't important. What's important is that I keep my promise… Fors warned herself.

At this moment, Mr. A, who was seated on a single sofa and was wearing an exaggerated hood, said hoarsely, "I have a mission.

"Help me find people who believe in the so-called 'Fool.'"

Ah? Fors instantly snapped back to her senses.

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CHAPTER 405 "CULT"

"The Fool?" The Beyonders who attended Mr. A's gathering either ruminated over the phrase or conversed with their companions to discuss whether they had ever met anyone who had a similar faith.

"When did such a cult appear?" someone asked in a low voice.

At this point, Mr. A made the attendant beside him hold up a blackboard with a few lines of words written in the Loen language.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era.

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog.

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

As the attendees examined the blackboard, Mr. A said in a hoarse and jarring voice, "Do not use Hermes to read what's written here. Even more so for Jotun, Elvish, Dragonese, and ancient Hermes. You shouldn't even write the corresponding descriptions; otherwise, there is a high probability that something terrible will happen.

"Help me find believers in The Fool. Of course, they might also be followers of the mysterious ruler above the gray fog or the King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck. As long as there's a clue, inform me immediately. The reward I'll provide will be so handsome that it will far exceed your imagination!"

"This description… It sounds like an incredible existence. I've only seen similar descriptions in the ancient texts of the seven gods!" a gathering member exclaimed.

His companion shook his head and said, "The beings which many cults believe in have similar descriptions."

"Is it really a cult?" The other gathering members were stunned when they heard their discussion.

"Likely. Typically, when we summon a creature from the spirit world, we might have three lines describing it, but one of the lines would be about 'the blessed one of someone' or 'that who belongs to.' It wouldn't be in this format!" A gathering member who was well-versed in mysticism gave an explanation.

As they vehemently conversed, Fors was nearly dumbfounded.

Isn't that the honorific name of Mr. Fool? Even though it's described in the Loen language, I'm sure of it! Why would Mr. A want to find the believers of Mr. Fool? Is the Aurora Order behind this? Fors's mind was in a mess.

She knew that Mr. A was a member of the Aurora Order because of a particular "terrorist organization" had announced its responsibility in the assassination of Intis Ambassador Bakerland.

After a brief moment of astonishment, Fors subconsciously began to examine herself, afraid that someone would discover that she was already a member of the Tarot Club and that, in some sense, she was an adorer of The Fool.

I just recited the honorific name of The Fool according to the ancient Hermes on that piece of paper and was pulled above the gray fog. No one knows about this, and I don't have to be afraid of being investigated… But there's a link to that piece of paper with Mr. Fool's honorific name written

on it. It was hidden in a book we borrowed from the Viscount Glaint… Thoughts rapidly flashed through Fors's mind.

The Fool that doesn't belong to this era… Isn't that the description I saw on that piece of paper? I even dreamed of an evil spirit! At the same time, Xio remembered the incident that had frightened her, but her long experience as a bounty hunter had kept her from revealing anything unusual.

And then, as she recalled, she thought about the origin of the piece of paper.

It was hidden in the bookcase of "History of the Loen Kingdom's Aristocracy"…That book was borrowed from Viscount Glaint's study…

Suddenly, a name flashed in both Fors's and Xio's minds at the same time: *Viscount Glaint!*

At that moment, Viscount Glaint was looking at the blackboard and said to himself with interest, "This honorific name is very rare.

"But it sounds very impressive!"

Just as he finished his sentence, he looked to his side in puzzlement, asking Fors and Xio, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Nothing." Xio and Fors rapidly shook their heads at the same time.

…

After dinner, in an elegantly decorated house.

Audrey brought the huge golden retriever, Susie, into the living room under the guidance of her psychology teacher, Escalante. She was attending the "academic" meeting that had been agreed upon last week.

Her maid and bodyguard stayed behind while she walked with Susie into a spacious activity room.

In the activity room, be it for the atmosphere or some other reason, the gas lamps were not lit. The room was lit by gold-plated candle lamps on the coffee table and cupboard.

Before Audrey could take a good look at her surroundings, she saw a gentleman in his thirties walking towards her. He wore a gray tailcoat.

"This is the owner of this place, Mr. Stephen Hampres, a furniture merchant." the long-haired Escalante introduced him.

She was just about to tell him Audrey's identity when Hampres chuckled and said, "Escalante, don't say anything. Let me have a chance at guessing."

He had a neatly trimmed mustache and charming dark brown eyes. He appeared very gentle and elegant, nothing like a furniture merchant but more like a university lecturer.

After seriously sizing up Audrey a few times, he smiled and said, "Escalante only mentioned that you were her student. Heh heh, I believe you're a cultured noble lady, and you aren't someone who only looks good. There's no need for you to worry about a decline in the quality of your life…

"You're a little excited, very curious, and a relatively simple but also full of love…

"Of course, the most obvious point is that you're very beautiful, just like an angel!"

He made a final joke, pressed his hand to his chest, bowed, and said, "Welcome, the beautiful Miss Angel."

You're right, as expected of a member of the Psychology Alchemists. However, what you managed to observe was the me from a few months ago. It's all a facade I've put on for myself… Audrey opened her mouth in surprise and astonishment.

"Did you know me before, Mr. Hampres?"

She didn't let her shocked expression linger too long on her face, because such emotions were meant to be instantaneous and wouldn't last too long.

If anyone were to be surprised for several seconds, then it meant that their performance was most likely an act.

Audrey didn't notice this at first, but after watching others "act" all this time, she naturally came up with a lot of rules.

"No, I still don't know you. This is just the basics of being a psychology enthusiast." Hampres chuckled.

Before he could finish his sentence, Audrey had already completed her observations and made a corresponding judgment based on her surroundings.

His attire and the furnishings of his house all indicate that he's a person who cares deeply about how people view him…

The sapphire on the ring of his left hand doesn't look small, but its actual quality is very ordinary. There are no symbols or magic labels on it… His finances aren't as good as he presents them to be… He's vain…

Even though he was very enthusiastic just now, the way he stands there, the direction in which his feet point, and the changes in his emotional colors all indicate that he still has many concerns and is on his guard…

He sincerely commended me on my looks, but it wasn't in the way a man would look at a woman. There are signs of him using facial products, and his eyebrows are definitely drawn. His skills are inferior to my make-up maidservant, Solia, but they're better than mine… The cologne he uses is "Confusion," something that I've only seen women use before… Yes, he probably likes men, and the role he plays is the weaker one in the relationship…

At the same time, Audrey expressed her longing skillfully.

"I'd love to have your observational powers, Mr. Hampres."

As she spoke, she maintained a faint smile while being introduced to the other seven or eight people in the activity room under Hampres's and Escalante's lead.

The lovers of both mysticism and psychology were either descendants of fallen aristocrats, associate professors at universities, or the children of the rich. For example, the father of a young man was the owner of Philip's Department Store, the most famous department store in Backlund.

In the exchange that followed, Audrey basically only listened. The only time she spoke was by asking questions, fully expressing her curiosity and yearning.

In this "academic" discussion, Escalante and Hampres deliberately mentioned the Body of Heart and Mind, as well as the spirit world and the collective subconscious. They also shared some relatively unique points of view, allowing Audrey to gradually understand some of the questions she had accumulated all this time.

When the discussion ended and they were out of the house, Audrey glanced at Escalante beside her and asked, with a little naivety, "Ms. Escalante, when will I-I be as good in psychology as Mr. Hampres?"

Escalante curled the corners of her lips and slightly tilted her head as she looked at her.

"Very soon…”

…

At night, Klein, who was about to get into bed, once again appeared above the gray fog.

Despite being a little sleepy, he was jolted awake by the news Miss Magician had reported.

The Aurora Order knows of The Fool? They know of my honorific name? The True Creator has locked onto me? Klein abruptly sat up straight, as though he was about to face an attack.

He quickly rejected the final theory. If the True Creator had indeed locked onto him, Mr. A would have long visited him on the pretext of collecting a copper penny for the gas meter. Perhaps, even a Saint might appear.

That is to say, only The Fool and his corresponding honorific name are known, and the clues point to Backlund… Who leaked the news? Klein frowned as he carefully thought about it.

Soon, he discovered a possibility.

Little Sun has recently chanted my honorific name, and it happened when he was interacting with a member of the exploratory team who was corrupted by the True Creator… He held a sacrificial ritual, and there were likely symbols corresponding to The Fool at the scene. The ancient palace above the gray fog appeared… So, the True Creator sensed the existence of The Fool and confirmed that I was the one who had been sacrilegious, no—harassing, no that's not right either—spying on him…

Also, Little Sun used the All-Black Eye at that time, which contains the mental corruption of the True Creator… Through that, "He" has confirmed that my adorers and believers are in Backlund?

I can't take the All-Black Eye out in the future!

Having roughly understood the problem, Klein was left with another problem.

Mr. A announced the bounty for Mr. Fool's believers at a not-so-private, relatively open Beyonder gathering. Is he just dumb, or is he deliberately

"fishing?"

*Sigh, the Aurora Order members are all bigoted lunatics. Their brains are mostly damaged, so it's impossible to deduce their real intentions! *

This is as the saying goes, as long as I'm crazy, you won't be able to guess what I'm thinking?

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CHAPTER 406
A JOYOUS BUT EXTREMELY HELPLESS REALITY

Above the gray fog, the magnificent palace stood silently.

Klein drummed his fingers rhythmically on the edge of the long bronze table, concentrating on what he could do in the face of the threat of the Aurora Order and Mr. A.

While having a hard time figuring out the other party's intentions, he instinctively came up with an idea.

Report Mr. A! Report illegal gatherings!

Klein could very easily learn of the location where Mr. A held the gathering through Miss Magician, and thus, he would be able to easily report it to the Nighthawks, the Mandated Punisher, or the Machinery Hivemind in secret.

An Oracle of the Aurora Order was bound to garner enough attention!

When that happens, Mr. A's safety would probably be at risk, so he probably wouldn't have the time or effort to track down the believers of The Fool.

The problem, however, was that this was bound to implicate a group of innocent Beyonders, and Klein suspected that this was the reason why Mr. A directly offered a reward for the believers of The Fool.

Perhaps he had long planned an escape. Once someone reports him, he would be able to confirm without a doubt that The Fool's believers were among the previous gathering members.

As for who it was exactly, that wasn't important. Mr. A and the lunatics of the Aurora Order were definitely capable of taking exhaustive measures!

And once these Beyonders fell into their hands, many of them would be unable to hide their secrets. The Aurora Order, or the Shepherd pathway which represented the True Creator, are the best at corrupting others.

When the ideology of a Beyonder was completely twisted and once they believed in the True Creator wholeheartedly, what else could be kept a secret?

It's not like there's no other way. It's best not to report it… Klein leaned back in his chair, collected his thoughts, and reorganized the entire matter.

As he was thinking, he suddenly realized a problem.

There were no believers or adorers of The Fool in this world!

Even the Tarot Club only had a few members, and no one had divulged the relevant information.

In other words, the Aurora Order wouldn't be able to find any relevant clues… There's nothing to worry about… The only bad outcome is that The Fool is now targeted by the True Creator. Although being targeted by an evil god isn't a pleasant feeling, it basically wouldn't affect anything else… Klein nodded thoughtfully.

He had thought it through very clearly. The only flaw in this matter was that he had once used the title of The Fool, written in the language of ancient Hermes, as a password for an anonymous account. However, with the sacrificial and bestowal rituals having proven useful, the account had long been abandoned and had long since been forgotten.

Since the last month and a half, no one had been noticed by Klein for copying the password, so it was possible to deduce the actual situation.

As such, bank employees, who had been in contact with the password but apparently do not understand mysticism, wouldn't be able to reveal it to anyone, and Beyonders would at most make requests in the Loen language, so even if they find the right person, it's not possible to connect the content described in the Loen language with that of the ancient Hermes password.

If anyone had copied it down, I would be the first to know and would be able to respond effectively… Besides, even if someone finds the password, it would be difficult to trace it back to Sherlock Moriarty. I use a variety of means every time… Miss Justice is also sufficiently careful when saving money… While rapping the table, Klein relaxed and said with a chuckle, "You believe that The Fool has many adorers and believers and that this would result in many clues that cannot be hidden?

"Wrong, especially wrong! There's only one believer and adorer of The Fool! And that's me!"

When he said that, he couldn't help but let out a self-deprecating laugh.

"It doesn't seem like it's something that I should be proud of…”

I need to be a little careful for the time being. I shouldn't go around using the banner of The Fool… Klein reminded himself and went back to answering Miss Magician's prayers.

He adjusted his posture, and said in a low, gentle voice, "Don't worry about it."

…

Don't worry about it… When Fors received the answer, she was surprised but also felt that it was only right.

In the eyes of Mr. Fool, the Aurora Order is nothing but a bunch of ants!

Fors once again recited his honorific name in a low voice, and she curiously asked, "Honorable Mr. Fool, which existence does the Aurora Order believe in?"

Then, she saw Mr. Fool sitting on a high back chair in the middle of the gray fog. He leisurely said, "The True Creator."

The True Creator… Fors's eyes widened as she instantly understood why Mr. A suddenly sought out the believers of The Fool.

With the help of the Tarot Club, that Sun youth in the City of Silver had successfully exposed the abnormality of the exploratory team and thwarted the True Creator's ploy!

Behind this incident is a confrontation and struggle between Mr. Fool and the True Creator… Fors didn't dare to ask any further, and she quickly recounted her meeting with the members of the Abraham family. She also mentioned Lawrence's will, the strange notebook, and the Beyonder characteristic he had left behind.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, what should I do?" she asked for advice with uncertainty.

What should you do? Miss Magician really is lucky… Why haven't I encountered such a good thing… Klein responded with a chuckle, "Follow the true desires in your heart."

He wasn't the least bit worried that Dorian Gray, from Pritz Harbor's Fishermen Association, would harm Miss Magician, because he knew she had two more stones on her bracelet, allowing her to teleport through the spirit world twice.

Follow the true desires in my heart? Fors lowered her head in thought.

"I understand. Thank you, Mr. Fool."

She decided to buy a steam locomotive ticket tomorrow. Using this mode of transportation, it would take a little over an hour to get from Backlund to Pritz Harbor, or maybe less.

After reporting everything, Fors requested to hold a sacrificial and bestowal ritual. After receiving a positive response, she exchanged 600 pounds in cash for the Sheriff Beyonder characteristic.

Holding up the fist-shaped object comprised of black iron, dark red, and silver colors, as well as its beautiful spiritual radiance, Fors felt joy and admiration.

Xio had long gathered the supplementary ingredients, so she would soon be promoted to Sequence 8… And I don't know when I'll become a Trickmaster… I hope Mr. Hanged Man and the others can help me find the appropriate Beyonder ingredients as soon as possible…

Xio had been subconsciously acting as an Arbiter, so she didn't have to worry about her digestion of the Sequence 9 potion, but once she becomes a Sheriff, what should she do? Should I ask permission from Mr. Fool to teach her the "acting method"…or should I simply suggest that she sneak into the police force?

…

At the end of the long, mottled table, Klein looked at the thick stack of cash in front of him and carefully counted it several times.

Through this method, I would have 1,230 pounds. I would still be short of 300 pounds to obtain a single Sequence 6 Beyonder ingredient. Of course, 1,500 pounds is the minimum price, and the actual transaction price is usually much higher than this…

Where else can I get money these days?

As soon as the bicycle patent is granted, shall I sell a portion of the shares?

Yes, I almost forgot how special the Tarot Club is. The Werewolf Beyonder characteristic cannot be sold in Backlund for now, so as to avoid being discovered by High-Sequence Beyonders from the Rose School of Thought. But I can always sell it elsewhere! I'll let The World entrust Mr. Hanged Man to sell it at the Sonia Sea at the next gathering. I'll offer a corresponding amount of the commission as his reward.

After subtracting the costs, the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic should give me at least 1000 pounds. It will be more than enough for a single Sequence 6 Beyonder ingredient.

Klein quickly came up with a plan and decided upon it.

He found it a little regrettable that Miss Xio didn't seem to have much money. After she became a Sheriff, even if she could quickly digest the potion, it would still take her a long time to buy the Interrogator's Beyonder characteristic. And if the Abraham family were to take interest in Miss Magician, his subsequent Astrologer potion formula would no longer be marketable.

What a pity… Klein sighed and returned to the real world.

…

Wednesday morning.

Klein didn't suffer from insomnia due to being targeted by the True Creator and the Aurora Order's pursuit. He slept till daybreak and happily went out to buy a Desi pie for breakfast.

There was no doubt that Desi pie required sweet iced tea to match it.

As he enjoyed the food and flipped through the newspapers, he discovered the advertisement for the Ernst Firm and learned that there would be a

Beyonder gathering convened by Eye of Wisdom tomorrow night.

This time, I'll be able to request to purchase the relevant Beyonder ingredients… But there's a high chance that it wouldn't be available. Even if there's something, it will be supplementary ingredients like the hair of a Deep-sea Naga… Klein seriously considered the channels in which he could find the ingredients.

He spread out his left hand and counted with his fingers.

From the Tarot Club, there are the outlets of Little Sun, Mr. Hanged Man, Miss Justice, and the rest. Beyond that, I have Eye of Wisdom's gathering; Miss Bodyguard and Maric, but I shouldn't contact them if possible for the time being. Also, hmm… Yes, I have Vampire Emlyn White. Didn't he mention that he would write to ask some powerful Sanguines? That's what social connections can bring about!

Coming to this thought, Klein immediately decided to go to the Harvest Church to wait for Emlyn White.

Although it was impossible for the Aurora Order to track him down, it still gave him a sense of urgency, making him want to gather the Beyonder ingredients as soon as possible. One he digested his potion, he would quickly advance to Sequence 6.

Ten in the morning, South of the Bridge, Rose Street.

In his double-breasted frock coat, Klein took off his half top hat and strolled into the rather small Harvest Church.

At first glance, he saw the giant-like Father Utravsky and Emlyn White who was dressed in brown priest robes.

The latter was wiping the candle lamps with a numb look on his face, as though he would rather be dead.

What a coincidence… Wait, don't tell me he's here for the entire day? He only returns home at night? Klein casually found a seat and sat down. There were less than five devotees in the entire cathedral.

Emlyn White also saw him and put down the rag. He walked over and sat beside him.

The vampire's expression suddenly became lively. He raised his chin and said with a chuckle, "You came here suddenly because you have something you need my help with, right?"

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CHAPTER 407
THE TRUE ADORER

Inside the Harvest Church.

Klein tilted his head to glance at Emlyn White. Without ruining the serene atmosphere, he deliberately suppressed his voice and laughed, returning with a question.

"Are you short on money?"

As soon as the words left his mouth, he felt as if he were asking if Emlyn knew about the multi-level marketing company, Amway.

Emlyn was first taken aback before he scoffed.

"Don't insult a noble Sanguine with money!"

Klein instantly sneered. Looking at the tall and brawny Father Utravsky in front of him, he said rather casually, "According to what I know, those handmade puppets are not cheap. They can even be called expensive, especially those that are as tall as a human."

"…” Emlyn gaped his mouth in an attempt to retort, but he failed to say a word.

After a moment of silence, he coughed lightly, feigned indifference, and said, "Tell me, what is it that you want my help with? I'm not a Sanguine who likes riddles."

Klein didn't look at the vampire next to him. He smiled and said, "I have a friend who is about to advance. He needs to collect the relevant Beyonder ingredients. I wonder if you can help?"

"Are you doubting the capabilities of a Sanguine?" Emlyn White said arrogantly. "Even if I don't have them, I can write and inquire from the nobler Excellencies."

That's what I want… Klein immediately responded with a deluge of words, "Mutated pituitary gland of a Thousand-faced Hunter and 100 ml of its blood. Characteristic of a Human-skinned Shadow and five strands of a Deep-sea Naga. As long as I can get any of these, I will pay you the corresponding price. The cheaper the price, the more you will be rewarded."

He purposefully increased the number of supplementary ingredients to avoid any losses.

Upon hearing this description without any stuttering, Emlyn White suddenly felt as if he had fallen into a trap of sophistry.

He calmed his emotions and said, "The cost for the Beyonder ingredients is at least 100 pounds, while supplementary ingredients are at least 10 pounds. Although I'm not clear of the level of the things you want, I believe that they're definitely not cheap or common. Otherwise, you wouldn't have come to me for help."

Very smart… Klein laughed.

"Deal!

At this moment, Emlyn White had a deep suspicion that he was asking for too little.

Therefore, he added, "Mr. Detective, do you have any clues on removing the psychological cues?"

Seeing that Father Utravsky was concentrating on his prayers at the altar ahead of them, Klein turned to glance at the vampire and said, "I have the simplest method."

"What?" Emlyn White's red eyes lit up.

"Defeat Bishop Utravsky and snatch his Mental Terror Candle away," Klein said with a chuckle. "After you meet up with your parents, you should possess the strength needed. Are three Sanguines not the match of a single Dawn Paladin?"

The corners of Emlyn's mouth twitched as his expression collapsed.

"We lost.

"We couldn't beat him…

"My parents were nearly captured. That Mental Terror Candle is really strange…"

*So you've already tried… The entire family almost converted to become believers of Mother Earth… Three Sanguines weren't even able to defeat Father Utravsky? With the help of the Mental Terror Candle and the Blood Transfuser, Father Utravsky is that terrifying? Or are vampires too weak? However, all the rumors point towards vampires being rather powerful… *Klein said in thought, "Then you can write a letter and ask for the help of the noble Excellencies. There shouldn't be a lack of powerful experts among the Sanguine."

Emlyn White answered with a numb expression, "They refused."

Suddenly, he looked at Klein with hope.

"Can you defeat Father Utravsky? Or could your friend beat him?"

*After receiving the Sun Brooch and the Biological Poison Bottle and digesting most of the potion, I originally thought that I would be able to defeat Father Utravsky in my Spirit Body state. However, your description just now made me uncertain. Is the Mental Terror Candle that bizarre? This kind of Sealed Artifact is obviously great at restraining Spirit Bodies… *Klein rationally shook his head.

"No way."

He quickly changed the subject.

"Why would those noble Excellencies of the Sanguine refuse your request? To them, this should be a simple favor."

Emlyn White's face instantly turned ashen.

"They say that Father Utravsky is an adorer of Mother Earth. They do not wish to enter into direct conflict with him. They are studying means to remove the psychological cue. For example, they are venturing deep into the Sonia Sea, the Fog Sea, and the Berserk Sea, in search of the dragons that have long secluded themselves."

He added with a smile even uglier than a weeping face, "By the time they figure it out or find a dragon well-versed in the psyche domain, I might have already become a devout believer of Mother Earth… I'm beginning to appreciate how precious life is and how joyful a harvest is."

An adorer of Mother Earth? Father Utravsky is an adorer of Mother Earth? It's no wonder that he has so many mystical items… From the looks of it, as a powerful pirate, suddenly switching to the Mother Earth wasn't a simple matter… Klein sighed, and then he felt a sense of lingering fear.

He had almost agreed to Emlyn White's request to attempt to defeat Father Utravsky.

If I lose, then I might even be locked up in the basement and forced into confinement. If I win, I might just offend another deity, no—there's no way of me winning. The adorer of Mother Earth definitely has an appropriate trump card. If it wasn't for Father Utravsky suppressing his split personality, then I probably wouldn't have been able to defeat him…

Klein wisely didn't pursue the topic. He once again looked at Father Utravsky and said, "You can try to find an organization called the Psychology Alchemists."

Otherwise, you'll have to wait for Miss Justice of our Tarot Club to become a Psychiatrist. By then, you might be reluctant to break away from the faith of Mother Earth… Klein silently added.

To him, it was best if Emlyn White also joined the Psychology Alchemists. That way, if Miss Justice encountered any problems in the organization, he could help her with other resources, and Klein wouldn't always have to summon himself, who was the trinity of The Fool, an adorer, and a believer.

"Psychology Alchemists? I've never heard of it." Emlyn shook his head disdainfully. "It must be a secret organization that recently appeared."

"This organization has existed for one or two hundred years, at the very least." Klein denied his statement.

"For a Sanguine with a long lifespan, one or two hundred years means it recently appeared. Among the noble Excellencies, a nap might be as long as a century," Emlyn White said proudly.

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he looked ahead, cleared his throat, and said, "Do you know how to contact that organization?"

Klein was going to answer that there was a man in the Tingen City's asylum named Dr. Daxter Guderian, who's a member of the Psychology Alchemists, but he stopped those words just before they came out of his mouth.

With the True Creator targeting me, it's best that I don't get involved with people or matters in Tingen. There's a certain risk of exposure, and once exposed, with the Aurora Order's madness, they would definitely not let Benson and Melissa go… Klein slightly shook his head and said, "I've only heard of this organization.

"You can write and ask the other Sanguine."

Emlyn White was disappointed and stopped talking about it. He turned his head to look at Klein and said, "I'm guessing your friend who's about to advance is you."

Klein looked forward without a care and replied leisurely, "Congratulations, you got it right."

"…” Emlyn White was stunned. This was completely different from what he had expected!

Noticing his change, Klein laughed softly.

"Mr. White, the most suitable job for you isn't to be an apothecary but to be an actor."

Emlyn was stunned at first, but he immediately raised his head arrogantly and said, "I'm a deep, noble Sanguine. I don't rely on my looks to make a living."

Do you think I'm praising you for being handsome? Klein slowly stood up and laughed.

"No, I mean, you are very talented at comedy."

While Emlyn White's expression froze, he squeezed his way out to the aisle and said, "Don't forget what I entrusted you with."

…

Pritz Harbor, White Oak Street.

Fors Wall took the steam locomotive early in the morning and arrived at the kingdom's largest and most important port. She had also booked tickets for her return trip by boat which was relatively inexpensive.

Taking in the smell of the sea, Fors saw many of the dockworkers who were in a hurry.

In the middle of each season, the port was swarming with temporary workers for relatively decent pay, and many poor people living in Backlund's East Borough would head southeast on foot and in groups, traveling a distance of more than 60 kilometers. This was the same thing they did when harvesting hops.

*The roads are wider than Backlund's, and the air quality isn't bad, but it's relatively dirtier… *Fors looked around and found the Fishermen Association in an old building.

Without much trouble, she met Dorian Gray in an office.

The gentleman was of medium build, with exaggerated arms. His hair was combed rather neatly, completely unlike most of the members of the association who had hairstyles that looked like bird nests.

He should also be an Abraham family member… After explaining the purpose of her visit, Fors passed Lawrence's will, along with the strange notebook and the diamond-like Beyonder characteristic.

Dorian received the items with a complicated expression before opening the will first.

After reading it carefully, he lifted his head and looked earnestly at Fors with his blue eyes.

"Your kindness and honor are praiseworthy. Ms. Wall, I shall always remember the help you provided Aulisa and Lawrence.

"Can you accept my gratitude? I wish to invite you to lunch."

"No problem." Fors was still wondering how to pass the time before her ship sailed.

Dorian immediately arranged for her to wait in the next lounge, offering black tea, snacks, newspapers, and magazines.

Returning to the office, the gentleman opened a hidden cabinet with some misgivings and took out an item.

It was a pure crystal ball shining with a radiant light.

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CHAPTER 408
A BOLD ASSUMPTION

Dorian drew the curtains, cloaking the office with darkness before he sat down.

He held the crystal ball in his left hand while touching its top with his right palm. As he stroked the crystal ball back and forth, he kept chanting softly.

Gradually, the radiant points of light within the crystal ball began to shine brighter and brighter, becoming more and more obvious, as if the stars in the night sky were casting their reflections.

Often used to determine the direction of fate, the stars in the trajectory of one's life surfaced one after another, forming a three-dimensional astrolabe with many revelations from the spirit world that resembled symbols.

Dorian Gray finally stopped and studied it.

She wasn't lying… That really was the trajectory of the situation… She seems to be able to bring about changes to the Abraham family—optimistic changes… As the light from the crystal ball dimmed, Dorian stood up, having already made up his mind.

At lunchtime, in the Four-Winged Bird restaurant.

In front of Fors lay a filleted fried fish which had rosemary scattered over it. Its skin was crispy, its meat fresh, and it didn't have any fine bones. It was rather tasty, but the only problem was that the cook had an extremely warped sense of aesthetics. He had deliberately kept the eyes of the fish

bulging out of its head, and by plating the food, he made the fish look up, as though to express its indignation over its death.

Fors pushed the head down, cut off the tail, and covered the upturned eye.

At that moment, Dorian Gray began moving his fork and knife as he casually said, "Aulisa really liked mysticism and had done some research in this area. When you were packing her things, did you see any books, notes, or other items?"

"There were some notebooks and books," Fors answered frankly. "As a result, I became a mysticism enthusiast, but unfortunately, I couldn't understand some of the content at all."

For example, the Sights in the Spirit World. Not only was it absurd, illogical, and messy, incapable of expressing ideas, even if I forced myself to read it and systematically calm my impatience, it was still difficult to remember its contents. I would forget it once I finished reading it, let alone understand it… Fors added inwardly.

Dorian nodded slightly and laughed.

"Then you can consult me. I'm also a mysticism enthusiast, quite a proficient one if I may add."

"Really? That's great!" Fors answered appropriately.

Seeing that she was really interested, Dorian immediately diverted the topic to mysticism. Sometimes he would bring up the spirit world, and sometimes he would talk about his Cogitation experience. Having been prepared before he even stepped into the restaurant, he had deliberately chosen a secluded and quiet spot. Hence, he didn't need to fear that the customers around them would overhear their conversation.

At the end of the lunch, Dorian offered, "I didn't know how to express my gratitude, but now I don't have to worry about it anymore. Heh heh,

although Lawrence had paid you, I don't think that's enough to match your kindness, goodheartedness, and honor.

"Ms. Wall, you can write to me and ask about any questions you have about mysticism. That's the least I can do to express my gratitude."

"That's what I wish for." Fors didn't refuse.

From the exchange just now, she could clearly tell that Dorian Gray possessed rich, systematic mysticism knowledge. He was indeed worthy of being a member of the ancient Abraham family.

And this was also considered something she was lacking in. Although she had mastered quite a lot of knowledge about the Beyonder world, it all came from a few books and notebooks that didn't go in-depth, as well as random information she had heard and experienced from the various gatherings she attended. It wasn't comprehensive or systematic enough, and it just had too many shortcomings.

Upon hearing her reply, Dorian raised his cup and smiled.

"I hope that one day, we will also possess mysterious and extraordinary powers."

…

North Borough in Backlund. Saint Samuel Cathedral.

A group of men wearing black windbreakers and red gloves entered an underground area. The leader was a man in his forties with soft facial features and long hair.

Wearing a pompous top hat, he carried a black cane which was inlaid with gold. He quietly followed the Nighthawk leading the way and entered a rather spacious room.

There were many bookshelves in the room, with various dossiers placed on them. A mesmerizing, beautiful woman wearing a black robe with blue eyeshadow and blush was leisurely sitting in a high back chair. She didn't get up to greet him. It was the former Spirit Medium, Daly.

"Soest, all the information you need is over there." Daly gestured with her chin at the table by the door.

The middle-aged man named Soest smiled and said, "Daly, why were you sent to guard this place? You should be tasked with more important matters."

"No, this is what I wanted. I need to settle down and read more information." Daly chuckled. "This is to ease my future progress. Humans are fragile creatures, and they need a certain amount of time to calm down. No one can always be in peak condition, enjoying the thrill and pleasure without any rest."

“…Your style really has never changed. Unfortunately, you've never given me the chance." Soest burst out laughing.

Daly shook her head seriously and said, "Obviously, you don't understand me. My current hobby has turned even more novel. If you can turn yourself into a rotten corpse or expose your white bones, then I'll definitely be filled with interest in you."

She turned to look at the "Red Glove" behind Soest. "Leonard, why did you choose to join his team? This fellow is conceited, arrogant, and gutless. He keeps fantasizing that women would take the initiative to crawl into bed, waiting for him. To be honest, perhaps this is the unique trait of a Nightmare?"

When she mentioned "Nightmare," Daly visibly paused.

Leonard helplessly said, "Ma'am Daly, this was the arrangement of His Excellency Cesimir."

"Is that so… I can see that you agree with my views on Soest," Daly concluded in a slightly husky voice.

Leonard was momentarily at a loss for an explanation.

Fortunately, Soul Assurer Soest didn't pay much attention to Daly's words. Walking over to the table filled with information, he picked up a dossier and flipped through it. Leonard and the others immediately surrounded him, imitating their leader.

After the sound of paper flipping went on for some time, Soest casually asked, "What's new in Backlund recently? Something you think is worth paying attention to."

Daly's eyes moved slightly. After thinking for a while, she said, "A few Beyonders who work with us have passed on news that many people are searching for an organization that believes in The Fool, and they have given the corresponding honorific name…"

After describing The Fool's honorific name in the Loen language, she chuckled.

"I seem to be witnessing the birth of an entirely new cult. Of course, it might be the incarnation of an old friend.

"What do you think, Soest?"

Soest considered the matter seriously before saying, "No, I've never heard of such an organization."

At that moment, Leonard looked up from the dossier he was reading and mused, "Could this have something to do with the two tarot rituals we're investigating?

"The Fool is the first card in a deck of tarot cards, the most important Major Arcana card!"

Daly froze for a second, then she nodded thoughtfully.

"That's an interesting idea.

"But there's no evidence. It's pure speculation, and it cannot even be considered a deduction," Soest said, disapproval within his tone.

Leonard revealed a faint smile and said, "Emperor Roselle once said to make a bold hypothesis and then carefully back it up."

…

Hillston Borough, Quelaag Club.

As soon as Klein entered the hall after leaving the Harvest Church, he saw the equestrian teacher, Talim Dumont, sitting in a secluded corner, seemingly pondering over something.

Noticing that lunch was still some time away, Klein went over and greeted him with a smile.

"Good afternoon, Talim. You seem to have encountered another problem?"

Talim snapped to his senses with a start and hurriedly shook his head.

"No, nothing."

*You seem to have done something that you have a guilty conscience about? *Klein mumbled, sat down, and laughed.

"It's a pity Aaron and Mike aren't here, otherwise we'd be having another pleasant afternoon."

Talim smiled in response.

"They're all busy and have very little free time."

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he looked around and said, "Sherlock, there's an important figure who is very interested in you after hearing about your deeds. He would like to meet you. Would you be willing?

"Frankly speaking, this leaves me envious. It's a very rare opportunity."

Wait, what deeds did I do? Help Mrs. Mary catch her adulterous husband? Accompany Reporter Mike to a brothel? Even in my past few trips to East Borough, I didn't do anything impressive… At the very most, they'd know that I made a contribution to the serial murders and that I helped Dr. Aaron resolve his nightmare by providing him with counsel… Klein was confused.

After two seconds, he suddenly understood the reason.

The important figure must've asked Talim if he knew of an excellent detective, and he could only think of me, so he offered to embellish descriptions about me that sounded pretty impressive, such as the true person who cracked the case behind the serial murders, the person who noticed that Mrs. Mary's former husband and his mistress had attempted to siphon funds from the Coim Company. I was probably described as being effective and sharp, a great detective who struck swiftly and precisely… This is how you tout each other in business… Klein sighed.

He hesitated for a moment and said, "I'm sorry, Talim. But as a detective, I have my own principles, and that is to not get involved in matters involving important figures. On the stage of the higher-ups, what might be a sneeze-like friction among them might very well be an unbearable disaster for me.

"I won't paint a target on my back, so I won't see this important figure."

This was actually something Klein had decided upon before he became a detective.

He was prone to an investigation once he was involved with high society; therefore, before he became a Faceless, he didn't want to bear such risks.

“…You're very rational." Talim sighed and said, "The important figure has anticipated this reaction and believes that such a detective is even more trustworthy, so he wishes for you to take on a commission that wouldn't involve high society."

"What kind of commission?" Klein asked.

Talim chuckled and said, "The Capim case which you and Mike were talking about last time. The important figure is very interested in the organization that uses tarot cards. He said that there has been more than one such case and wishes for you to find any relevant clues."

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CHAPTER 409
DECEMBER

What? Getting me to investigate myself again? Klein nearly suspected that this was a deliberate test.

An organization that uses tarot cards to represent itself really is interesting, and I think so, but I don't want to sell myself out… Right, Capim's matter is clearly not that simple. He had a total of four Beyonders protecting him, so there must be a powerful faction behind him. What's the difference between investigating this case and being involved in high society strife? Well, this isn't something Sherlock Moriarty should know… Klein revealed a thoughtful expression, and while weighing his options, he said, "It's not easy to find a mysterious organization. Besides, it's very dangerous."

Talim seemed to have expected his answer and chuckled.

"Sherlock, there's no need for you to take risks. The important figure's intention is for you to pay more attention and to gather the relevant information or rumors. Here's 5 pounds in cash, money for your activities. Even if you don't receive any valuable information, the money is yours. And once you gather any useful clues, he'll pay you per lead and reimburse you for your expenses throughout the process."

Such good conditions? That important figure has put a lot of his attention on this matter… Does he have connections with the forces behind Capim, or does he wish to find the mysterious organization that uses tarot cards as a code name to help him? Reimburse… It's been a long time since I've heard someone promise me something like this… Since he's already gone so far by promising me such perks, it would appear very suspicious if a private detective were to refuse the commission… Furthermore, the matter of

investigating myself should clearly be left to me… Klein hesitated for a few seconds and said, "Alright. I'll do my best."

He didn't stand on ceremony, and he accepted the five one-pound notes that Talim handed him, intending to provide a vague clue every week or two.

*Isn't the Aurora Order looking for The Fool? The Fool is obviously part of a tarot card! I hope that important figure will pursue this path all the way and get rid of Mr. A… *A thought began to form in Klein's mind.

…

Under Saint Samuel Cathedral.

Soul Assurer Soest assembled his team together to discuss their subsequent actions.

He looked at the black-haired, green-eyed Leonard Mitchell and asked, half-asking and half-evaluating, "If I were to relegate this matter to you, how do you plan on investigating the two cases related to the tarot ritual?"

Leonard lifted his hand to comb his hair, smiled, and said, "First, I would go according to my train of thought from before. I would do a reverse search for the people or organizations seeking The Fool's believers. They might know something. Second, I would reinvestigate the first two cases and place all the people involved in a name list, regardless of if they were suspects or not! Then, I'll use the powers of a Nightmare to inquire and eliminate them one by one. The devil might be in the details, hidden in the person who's most improbable."

Soest let out a chuckle.

"I've read through the dossiers. These two cases involve a lot of people, each living in different places. Wanting to re-examine them is quite difficult, and some of them are already Beyonders who are secretly active beneath the surface. They know how to hide themselves very well, and we

have no way of knowing where they are. If we were to perform an investigation according to your idea, then what we need wouldn't be a small team. The Church would have to inject at least five more Sequence 7 or above Nighthawks and the corresponding support personnel."

"The case we are in charge of is focused on the devil-summoning case," another Red Glove reminded Leonard.

Leonard didn't seem angry as he let out a soft laugh.

"I know. I'm only providing my point of view. As for whether or not it is used, or the extent to which it will be used will be decided by Captain Soest."

He paused for a moment and revealed a puzzled expression.

"I don't understand why the two cases related to the tarot rituals didn't have a high priority. The former involved an evil god's attempted descent, countless times more serious than a mere devil summoning."

Soest picked up his coffee and took a sip before leisurely answering, "The Nighthawks have limited manpower. All cases require a certain priority level. Up to now, the secret organization represented by tarot cards hasn't expressed any obvious malice towards us. Their actions, to a certain extent, have helped us. For example, they foiled the descent of the True Creator, as well as letting us know that the human trafficker, Capim, isn't a simple person. There must be some big secret underlying the matter."

After saying that, he smiled and said, "Perhaps they can help us discover even more unsavory matters.

"Of course, the necessary investigations must be carried out. No one can guarantee that a secret organization will not end up being our enemy in the future."

"I see, Captain Soest. Let's focus on the devil summoning case," Leonard said earnestly.

…

In a Backlund winter that was inseparable from fireplaces and fog, time flew by amidst these cold and gray sensations.

In the blink of an eye, there was only half a month left until the new year.

Klein extinguished the charcoal in the fireplace and put on a double-breasted frock coat over his dark red woolen vest.

Nearly three weeks ago, Leppard finally received the bike patent and began looking for suitable second-round investors. Steam power mogul, Framis Cage, ended up showing some interest in this.

After several meetings, the three parties agreed to conclude their final negotiations today.

During the past month or so, Klein led an uneventful life. Through his investigations, he slowly digested the potion by strictly following the principles. Now, he was just short of a relatively bigger performance that he needed to initiate to completely digest it.

If there are no urgent matters, I can avoid taking risks. It would take about another… As his mind wandered, Klein removed the half top hat from the coat rack and smoothed the folds with a brush and handkerchief, removing the dust.

The badge left behind by Lanevus indicated a 4th January gathering. He had no strong intentions on attending it.

During this time, the Tarot Club continued being held on a weekly basis. Klein obtained a few pages of Roselle's early diary entries, allowing him to

witness how he went from a weakling, who only knew how to dream without taking actual action, to becoming a playboy who actively hunted.

Apart from this, he gained almost nothing. Although the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic was handed over to The Hanged Man for sale via The World, a sale involving more than a thousand pounds was obviously not easy to close. The Werewolf's unique trait of being cursed also caused many interested parties to shrink back from it.

However, a few days ago at a Tarot Gathering, The Hanged Man told The World that he had contacted an Artisan from the Church of the God of Steam, and the other party was clearly interested.

*Let's hope the deal with be closed this week… There are still no clues to the Wind-blessed formula which Mr. Hanged Man wants… *Klein packed his personal belongs, picked up his cane, wore his hat, and walked out the door. The Wind-blessed potion formula was a Sequence 6 formula. It wasn't that easy to encounter one. The Hanged Man, Alger, had waited for more than a month without receiving any good news.

Justice Audrey, after undergoing a long period of observation and testing, was finally accepted by the Psychology Alchemists. She reported to Mr. Fool that she should be officially joining the secret organization this week, hoping to be blessed ahead of time to prevent any accidents from happening. For this, she was prepared to plunder at least ten pages of Roselle's diary entries from the Psychology Alchemists for Mr. Fool without any compensation.

As for the dragon specimen in Duke Negan's treasury, she had already confirmed that it was a Thousand-faced Hunter. However, it was purely a sample that was without the corresponding Beyonder characteristic or flowing blood.

The 2,000 pounds she owed Mr. Fool's adorer wouldn't be repaid until February or March of next year. This was because, although she would officially come of age at the New Year's Ball and be able to take charge of a

portion of her fortune, she would still be under the supervision of her parents and wouldn't be able to sell them at will. Furthermore, she was still short of Viscount Glaint's final payment, so she needed ample time to raise the money in secret.

The Magician Fors, with the help of The Hanged Man, finally obtained the blood of a Deep Sea Marlin. She paid him 320 pounds for it, which reduced her savings to 120 pounds.

In order to make up for her loss and for the stomach pouch of a Spirit Eater, she began to furiously rush to write her new book which quickly took shape. It told a story about adventure, love, traveling, storms, pirates, and many other elements fused into a whole.

Her and Dorian Gray's correspondence never stopped, and the other party had recently announced that they would be coming to Backlund to pay their respects to Aulisa, Laubero, and Lawrence.

The Sun Derrick, who was acting normally as suggested by The Hanged Man, continued his daily patrols, amassed merit points, and didn't attempt any rituals.

At every Tarot Gathering, he would skillfully pretend to be asleep, and he didn't reveal any problems for the time being. Usually, he would occasionally take a nap to prevent any regularities from being detected which would put him under suspicion.

According to him, Shepherd Elder Lovia, didn't leave the bottom of the spire seven days later and was still locked in there for unknown reasons.

With the Aurora Order's Mr. A searching for the followers and adorers of The Fool, they failed to receive any valuable clues with Klein's deliberate attempt to keep a low profile. And the Beyonders, who knew the honorific name of The Fool all understood that they should never chant such words carelessly. Unless they were in dire straits, and they definitely didn't have the courage to pray to an existence that was suspected of being an evil god.

*Emlyn mentioned the last time that he had some clues for the corresponding ingredients and that he might be able to confirm it soon, but the problem is that I'm lacking the money now… *With a silent grunt, Klein took his cane and walked to Lawyer Jurgen's door.

When the doorbell rang, he took the initiative and instinctively took two steps back.

Not long after, the door opened and old Mrs. Doris cheerfully opened her arms to give Klein a warm hug.

"Oh, the doctor you introduced last time was wonderful! My body hasn't been this healthy for almost ten years!" Doris, seeing that the detective was standing far away, could only fold her arms and express her delight and feelings in words.

Klein said in an amused and exasperated tone, "Mrs. Doris, you've already told me this for the ninth time."

He saw Brody, the black cat, sitting on top of the coat rack. Although it looked precarious, he was able to maintain his balance.

I can do that as well.… Klein made a self-evaluation.

"Is that so?" Old Mrs. Doris asked, perplexed.

She immediately tossed the question to the back of her mind and said with a smile, "Are you here for Jurgen?"

Klein immediately revealed a smile.

"Yes."

Matters involving negotiations needed the help of a professional lawyer.

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CHAPTER 410
FRAMIS CAGE

St. George Borough, Sird Street.

As soon as Klein and Jurgen alighted from the carriage, they saw a massive object parked in front of Inventor Leppard's door.

It was iron-black in color, with a dozen wheels in three groups, the top of which towered like a ship's chimney, and smoke was emitted from it.

It was a steam engine that Klein had seen in magazines and on the streets, often described by the public as an ironclad warship with a rather exaggerated body.

If the streets that hadn't been built or rebuilt in the last twenty or thirty years, then it would've filled the roads and left no room for horse carriages. Therefore, transportation vehicle such as this could only be seen in certain areas and places.

At this moment, the heavy glass window and door of the car opened, and two figures stepped out.

One of them was the steam power mogul, Framis Cage, whom Klein had met before. A quarter of his blood was of the Feysac Empire, and he had pale blue eyes and a tall, but bulging build. He had a pipe in his mouth.

The person beside him was wearing a heavy black coat with a gray scarf wrapped around his neck. His features were unremarkable. He looked common with his black hair and brown eyes; yet, he exuded an inexplicable sense of familiarity.

"Hi, Detective Moriarty, you're really punctual. This is my lawyer and partner, Pacheco Dwayne."

While they conversed, two burly men got out of the steam-powered vehicle. They were obviously Framis's bodyguards.

*How unprofessional? Shouldn't they come down first and then open the door for their boss? *Klein grunted, smiled in greeting, and introduced his lawyer, Jurgen.

While he was waiting for Leppard to open the door, he casually chatted with him.

"Mr. Cage, is this kind of steam-powered vehicle popular? Do a lot of people like it?"

Framis Cage laughed.

"Those who think that they're decent say that it's too barbaric and crude, and ordinary people can't afford it. Only I, an enthusiast of such machinery and steam, would be willing to buy it."

"It's mainly because many streets are too narrow," Klein said in consolation.

Framis Cage was the investor he found, and he had little to do with Leppard.

When he was playing cards at the Quelaag Club, he had deliberately mentioned it, and the equestrian teacher, Talim, immediately mentioned that Framis liked similar inventions, offering to introduce them to each other.

This made Klein sigh with emotion. *The club really was a great place to develop connections, and the members who joined it were never really interested in the free food, drinks, and activity venues.*

"Haha, this is indeed one of the reasons. As the population increases and the cities grow larger, the horse carriage will definitely be eliminated. It's just too slow. What this world is pursuing now is efficiency!" Framis said confidently.

He then revealed a smile.

"Also, I've already obtained an order from the military. They want me to make some improvements, just like it was mentioned in Roselle's manuscript; increase the armor's bulletproof plating, cover the tracks so that it can drive on a simple road. In addition, add a thick cannon barrel, and then this will be a brand-new weapon."

Roselle's manuscript… Klein sighed silently and for a moment he didn't know what to say until, finally, Leppard opened the door.

In the discussion that followed, the main people talking were Jurgen and Pacheco. The two lawyers would argue with each other and discuss the terms with their employers, while the completely unprepared Inventor Leppard sat there in a daze. Only when asked would he give his opinion.

Finally, the three parties agreed that Framis would invest a thousand pounds to take 20% of the shares, and the shares of Klein and Leppard would fall by an equal ratio, 28% and 52%.

At the same time, Framis agreed to buy a further 18% of Klein's shares at a premium, and this cost him a thousand pounds after taxes.

Similarly, he would buy a 9% stake in the company at a post-tax price for 500 pounds.

As a result of this deal, Framis became the largest shareholder in the newly established Backlund Bike Company, with a 47% share. He became responsible for the subsequent industrialization and marketing, while the company would be funded with the 1,000 pounds he invested as the initial capital.

Leppard was the second largest shareholder, with 43% of the shares. His job was to help in the setting up of the assembly line for mass production.

Mr. Klein, who only had the remaining 10% of the shares, became a purely financial investor.

And the 1,000 pounds he earned from selling his shares had sent his personal wealth skyrocketing to 2,235 pounds, almost enough for him to buy a main ingredient for a Faceless potion. As a private detective, he still continued accepting commissions in the past month or so, so his daily expenses didn't drain his savings.

I still have to pay 50 pounds to Lawyer Jurgen, leaving me with 2,185 pounds… I'll have to thank Talim when I see him… A thought flashed through Klein's mind. He signed and stamped the contract. Then, he stood up and shook hands with Framis and Leppard.

"I hope for a pleasant partnership."

Framis took out his golden pocket watch and looked at it before chuckling.

"Normally, we should have lunch together to celebrate the closing of a deal, but there's an important person waiting for me. I'm really sorry, but there will still be a lot of opportunities in the future."

An important figure, another one… The one behind Talim? The one that I claimed reimbursement from using fake information that points to the Aurora Order? Klein suddenly felt a little guilty. He hurriedly smiled and said that he didn't mind.

After exiting the house and getting into a carriage, Jurgen suddenly frowned slightly.

"Sherlock, you agreed too readily."

"Why do you say that?" Klein asked curiously.

He didn't even know what Jurgen was talking about.

Jurgen said rather seriously, "When we were talking about the transfer of shares.

"Based on your description, and on Framis's performance, I can imagine a bright market prospect for bikes. Although it's just an invention at the moment, deflating the overall valuation, you should've kept more shares even though 5,000 pounds is a good price. That way you can get better returns in the future.

"I thought you were only going to sell 8% and have the confidence to haggle for 500 pounds, but you actually agreed to 18%. Even if it were only 500 pounds, you would have made a severalfold return on the investment. You shouldn't have been in such a hurry."

Because I'm in need of money… However, I did agree very readily without any hesitation. It was a huge transaction, so that does seem rather abnormal for me… As Klein thought back to the scene from before, he began to have some doubts deep down.

Was I unconsciously influenced by Framis or that Lawyer Pacheco? One of them is a Beyonder? Fortunately, the price was fairly reasonable… As he pondered over the matter, Klein said to Jurgen who was waiting for an answer, "The new year is coming soon…"

He had no idea how to explain it, so he randomly chose an opening.

If the other party was a smart person, then they would go along with the opening and perfect the explanation with their own reasoning. There was no need for Klein to describe it any further.

Of course, this was a move aimed at smart people. Ordinary people would end up pressing, "so" or "what exactly happened."

Lawyer Jurgen was obviously a smart man. Noticing Klein's brief silence, he nodded and said, "I understand.

What do you understand? I haven't even thought of what to say… Klein pointed to the steam metro station in front of them and said, "I'm getting off here. I need to meet an informant."

…

As the steam-powered vehicle roared forward, Framis, who was sitting in the front row, wound down the window and blew out a ring of smoke. He said to the inconspicuous Lawyer Pacheco, "Did you use your powers just now?"

"It was passively triggered," Pacheco said with a smile. "My powers aren't suitable for such situations. I prefer to face government or enterprise employees."

Framis nodded slightly.

"I just wanted to remind you.

"There's no need to use your powers in such situations. Do not let this affect what matters most."

"I understand," Pacheco replied in a low voice.

…

East Borough, in a cheap coffee shop.

When Klein arrived, Old Kohler was already waiting for him.

He removed his scarf, took off his hat, sat down across him, fished out a stack of one-soli notes, and handed it to him.

"For next week's expenses and a bonus for the information you provided me the last time. That's a total of one pound."

He was recently very generous with giving bonuses since he had already found a person to claim them from.

Old Kohler, whose face was clearly ruddier than before, received the cash, feeling a little embarrassed.

"The information I gave you previously didn't seem to be that important…"

"No, the importance depends on who wields it. There are a lot of things that you might find trivial, but it's how other people earn their money," Klein explained with a laugh. "What happened this week?"

Old Kohler took the stack of bills and stuffed it into his pocket. He said thoughtfully, "Just like before, many people are still looking for the believers of The Fool. Haha, how could anyone believe in The Fool? That isn't a good name."

…The corners of Klein's mouth slightly twitched.

"Are they making progress?"

The Aurora Order is really persistent… Klein thought helplessly.

"No, there's no such person." Old Kohler shook his head and then said, "There are a few people organizing strikes recently. They came to me a few times, claiming that they will be fighting for reasonable working hours and salaries."

It's a very normal thing in this era, but it can lead to quite serious consequences… Klein thoughtfully said, "Pay attention to the organizers of this matter. But don't be too anxious. Safety first."

"Alright." Old Kohler cleared his throat and said, "There have been a lot of gangsters and bounty hunters looking for a person these days. I don't know why, but I believe someone has offered a bounty."

"Who are they looking for?" Feeling the cold, Klein took a sip of his coffee.

The warm liquid ran down his esophagus and warmed his belly.

Old Kohler thought for a moment and said, "A man named Azik Eggers."

Azik Eggers… Azik Eggers? Klein looked up from his coffee cup and stared straight at Old Kohler, who was sitting across him.

*Isn't that Mr. Azik's full name? Why would someone suddenly offer a bounty for him? Ince Zangwill? *Relying on his Clown powers, Klein feigned indifference as he asked, "Did it say what kind of person he was?"

Old Kohler recalled and said, "He seems to be of Balam lineage and was once a university lecturer."

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CHAPTER 411
COMING IN THRONGS

Seems to be of Balam lineage… a university lecturer… It really is Mr. Azik, not someone sharing the same name… Using the information provided by Old Kohler, Klein basically confirmed that the person the bounty was aimed at was the suspected descendant of Death, Azik.

Here lies the problem. Who or what organization is looking for Mr. Azik?

The Numinous Episcopate whose ultimate goal is to revive Death? Ince Zangwill who likes to play the mastermind behind the scenes?

It's unlikely to be the latter. Ince Zangwill has Sealed Artifact 0-08, which allows a target to act according to his descriptions, and through a series of coincidences, he can achieve his desired objective. There's no need at all for him to use the gangs and bounty hunters to find Mr. Azik…

Wait, what if this is actually an arrangement by Sealed Artifact 0-08? Realizing that he's now the target of Mr. Azik but lacks the confidence to clinch victory in battle, Ince Zangwill is using 0-08 to instigate conflict between Mr. Azik and some particular faction, hoping to eliminate his enemy indirectly. And this reward was issued by that faction… It's very possible!

However, I can't rule out the Numinous Episcopate. To get revenge, Mr. Azik might have made contact with them. However, there were major differences between the two parties regarding the resurrection of Death, which eventually led to a falling out…

Klein instantly thought of two possibilities and the corresponding reasons.

He took a sip of his coffee and said to Old Kohler, "Help me find out who issued this bounty and its exact price. If it's appropriate, I'll take note of it while I'm at it."

"No problem." Old Kohler didn't feel that anything was amiss with Klein's request.

From a certain perspective, there were no essential differences between a private detective and a bounty hunter. The only difference was that the former would involve themselves in trivial matters such as catching adulterers in the act, finding cats, and helping others walk dogs, while they tended to use the powers of deduction more than brute force.

When Old Kohler finished describing what he had seen and heard, Klein briefly taught him some of the tricks of leading a conversation based on the Nighthawks' curriculum, as well as the contingency plans for specific scenarios.

"It's time for me to go to the docks. Thank you, Detective Moriarty, for allowing me to lead a good life once again!" Old Kohler picked up the old, worn-out hat on the table and thanked him sincerely.

The detective, in his view, not only provided him with a well-paid job, but he also taught him many useful things. Even if the detective no longer needed him as an informant, the skills he learned would allow him to barely survive in East Borough, especially since he was growing older and less capable of laborious work.

*A good life? In my opinion, what you have now is the basics of what a person should have… *After watching Old Kohler walk out the cheap coffee house, Klein sat there in a daze.

This was the first time that he had heard a friend's name from someone else since his arrival in Backlund, and it was also the first time that he might have grasped Ince Zangwill's whereabouts!

For the past three months, Klein's main goal had been to digest the potion and enhance himself, especially after he killed Lanevus.

That was because he knew very well that he and Ince Zangwill, who was most likely a High-Sequence Beyonder, had an unbridgeable gap. He couldn't be impatient for revenge, especially when it came to the chilling Sealed Artifact 0-08. He didn't even have the intention to approach and investigate it.

Scenes from the Blackthorn Security Company in Tingen replayed themselves in Klein's mind, and those bright polished shoes clearly appeared before his eyes.

Raising his head and slowly letting out a breath, Klein took his scarf and hat and walked out of the cheap coffee shop.

…

Hillston Borough, outside a rather old building.

Klein got off the carriage, pressed his hat, and went straight to the door.

It was Isengard Stanton's house.

The great detective had written to Klein a few days ago, inviting him to come over to discuss a murder case.

Mr. Klein, who has been busy with the financing of the bike project, tactfully replied that he had no time to spare as a form of rejection. To his surprise, Isengard Stanton didn't seem to mind and said that the case had hit a brick wall, making it unlikely that there would be any breakthroughs anytime soon. He was very willing to wait for Detective Sherlock Moriarty's visit and expressed how he looked forward to an exchange that ignited sparks of wisdom.

As such, Klein could only first divine a suitable date for the visit, picking the closest date after the negotiations, which happened to be this afternoon. With that, he wrote back and fixed an appointment.

Ding dong, ding dong.

Klein rang the bell twice and stepped back to wait.

More than ten seconds later, the door creaked open, and the assistant of the great detective, Isengard, said with a smile, "Good afternoon, Detective Moriarty. Mr. Stanton is waiting for you in the activity room. Would you like coffee or tea?"

The assistant was thin and wore gold-rimmed glasses. He looked both refined and professional.

Klein looked up at him and said, "Tea. Be sparing on the lemon slices."

"No problem." The assistant led Klein into the living room, pointed to the activity room and said, "Sorry, our servants are only temporary, and they just happened to be on their day off today, so I can only trouble you to go over alone."

Klein nodded and walked towards the activity room on the first floor.

As he lifted his hand to knock on the door, he suddenly felt that something was amiss.

I arranged a visit with Mr. Stanton a few days in advance. Why would I chance upon the temporary servants' day off?

Klein's eyes narrowed, and he pulled out a copper penny.

At this moment, the door to the activity room opened due to the knock, producing a tiny crack.

In the blink of an eye, as if some seal was lifted, the strong smell of fresh blood poured out and overwhelmed Klein's nose.

From what he could see, the reclining chair in the activity room was overturned and was stained with dark red blood. A book lay beside it, its cover facing up.

With just that one glance, Klein felt as if he was seeing a murder scene.

The name of the book caught his eye: "The Devil's Legend of Sivellaus Borough."

Devil… Klein was about to make a move when a strong wind suddenly blew in the activity room, quickly pulling the door back.

Creak!

Klein clearly saw the entire interior of the activity room.

The charcoal in the fireplace had long since burned out, and there was no longer any red embers glowing; the coffee table, the sofa, the chairs, the cupboard, and other items had either fallen or shattered. It appeared as if he witnessed an intense battle.

There was a lot of blood on the carpet and walls, and a lot of scorch marks, but there was no sign of a body at the scene, not even a stump limb.

Something happened to Detective Stanton? Klein suddenly took a step back, intending to first leave the place.

However, almost at the same time, he felt someone lock onto him.

Someone was staring at him with a cold and merciless gaze from an unknown location!

The moment he made a mistake in his response, he would immediately be met with a fatal blow!

How can this be a suitable day to visit Isengard Stanton? Was my interpretation of the revelation wrong? Klein didn't dare to act rashly.

However, he was neither too nervous or flustered. Having experienced many battles and "performances," he knew that he needed to stay calm during such moments.

*Tap, tap, tap. *Isengard Stanton's assistant walked over with a tray.

On the tray was a tin teapot and two white porcelain cups.

The assistant froze in place when he saw the scene in the activity room.

He looked at Klein, his face suddenly filled with fear as he stuttered, "You… killed… Mr… Stanton…”

Every time he said a word, a piece of flesh fell from his face as blood gushed out.

After he finished speaking, his body was torn to shreds, turning into a dismembered corpse. It was as if he had always been in that state, with everything preceding this being him in a state where he was stitched up.

Clang! Crack! The tin pot and white porcelain cup hit the ground at the same time, rolling or splashing, and the tea water quickly soaked the area.

Klein didn't move as he stood there watching everything that had happened. This was because he still felt like he was being watched.

The person who had caused this series of events appeared to be waiting for him to make a move before leaping onto his back and snapping his neck.

After an unknown period of time, in a silent and eerie stalemate, Klein saw the door to Isengard Stanton's house open up as a group of policemen in black and white checkered uniforms stormed in.

When they found the nauseating and dismembered corpses on the floor, they drew their revolvers and pointed them at Klein who stood at the doorway of the activity room.

Despite facing the black muzzles of the guns, Klein relaxed.

The wordless gaze that seemed to hold a gun to the back of his head disappeared at that instant!

Klein raised his hands and laughed helplessly.

"I won't say anything until I see my lawyer."

…

Backlund's Chissak Police Station.

Chained to a water pipe, Klein met Lawyer Jurgen once again.

"I will accompany you during the interrogation." There was nothing unusual about Jurgen's expression, as though Detective Moriarty belonged here.

Klein sighed and said, "What a tragedy. I should be considering what I will be eating tonight, not talking to a stone-faced police officer."

The thing he was most thankful for today was that due to the Aurora Order's investigation and the attention of the Rose School of Thought's High-Sequence Beyonder, he didn't bring any Beyonder items with him. His only revolver was easily concealed from the body search using a magic-like performance.

When he entered the interrogation room, he recounted the letter he received from Isengard Stanton about discussing a case without the police officer's questioning.

"Later, we'll go to your house with Mr. Jurgen to retrieve these letters. I hope they're still there." The officer in charge of the interrogation switched gears and asked, "How did you get to know Detective Isengard Stanton?"

Klein replied without hesitation, "Because of that serial murder case…"

At this point, he suddenly froze for a moment.

It reminded him of something. He had always suspected that there was a master behind the Devil dog, the person who had harrumphed when the Devil dog was killed.

*Yes, the book Stanton was reading before the attack was "The Devil's Legend of Sivellaus Borough"…Could it be that the owner of the Devil dog is beginning to take revenge after lying low all this time? And Detective Stanton was the person in the police records who provided the main clues or ideas. Furthermore, he was the one who received the bounty reward! *Klein quickly had a theory.

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CHAPTER 412
LETTER

When he thought about the possibility that the Devil dog's owner was involved, Klein changed his strategy and decided to recount his involvement with Isengard Stanton in great detail.

In addition, he took the initiative to mention Isengard Stanton's assembly of a team of detectives to investigate the serial murder and the portion of the bounty that they successfully obtained.

"In that commission, although I only gave some ideas, well—in the jargon of the private detective industry, I provided suggestions, but it was still considered the greatest contribution by Mr. Stanton, so I received the bulk of the bounty," Klein concluded.

The two officers in charge of the interrogation jotted down the information and asked if anyone could prove it. Klein gave them the names and addresses of Stuart, Kaslana, and the other private detectives.

"Very good, Mr. Moriarty. Your answer is detailed enough." A police officer stopped writing and asked, "How long did you spend in Isengard Stanton's home today? I mean, from the time you entered to the time we found you."

Klein thought for a moment and, without consulting Lawyer Jurgen, directly replied, "About two to three minutes."

What he said was based on what he truly felt.

Another police officer raised his eyebrows and said, "Many residents nearby were able to confirm that you entered Isengard Stanton's house

around 2:10 p.m. We arrived at the scene at 2:28 p.m., which is to say, you were in the house for about eighteen minutes, not two or three minutes!

"What exactly were you doing during this lengthy period of time? Why didn't you leave and call the police?"

Eighteen minutes passed? Klein frowned suddenly.

He felt that the stalemate he had with the existence which silently watched him lasted for slightly more than a minute. How did it take a full eighteen minutes?

Was it the strange feeling of being watched that confused my grasp of time, or was it something else? Is it the Beyonder powers of the other party? If it really was the owner of the Devil dog, he would at least be at Sequence 6, with a high probability of being Sequence 5… While Klein pondered, Jurgen leaned forward, ready to accuse the police of being posing leading questions.

That was not a very good reason, but he simply wanted to use this method to interrupt the pace of the interrogation and delay the unfavorable question for his client.

At this moment, Klein raised his hand to rub his forehead.

"What I just said was the truth. Based on what I felt, only two or three minutes had passed after I entered Detective Isengard Stanton's house."

Upon saying that, he emphasized, "Yes, based on what I felt."

The two officers exchanged looks before writing the statement down.

After a moment of silence, the officer who had asked the question said, "During those eighteen minutes, a servant who came back from outside the house rang the doorbell, but no one answered, so he looked in through the

oriel window and saw the floor full of corpses and that you were standing in the doorway of the activity room.

"He was terrified, running to the police station like a madman, and many passers-by and some residents had confirmed that."

Klein ignored the look in Lawyer Jurgen's eyes and shook his head.

"I didn't hear the doorbell."

The two officers exchanged looks again, but they made no comment. All they did was jot down what was said.

They asked questions about other details, and Klein, who had done nothing and was free from guilt, answered every question truthfully.

At the end, he couldn't help but ask, "Did you find Detective Isengard Stanton? It didn't seem like the activity room had a corpse. He's likely to be still alive, right…"

A police officer used a pen to tap on the table and said, "That's one of the things we're wondering about. Only the activity room in the house had signs of fighting, and the windows were closed, and they hadn't been opened for days. As you know, it's very normal to do so during Backlund's autumn and winter seasons.

"The attacker and Mr. Isengard Stanton left the room in a strange way, and we found no trace of him anywhere else in the house or in the neighborhood, not even blood."

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he questioned before answering his own question, "You definitely wish to mention the activity room's door and the door to the house, but many people have confirmed that there was no pursuit nearby, nor was there anyone taken hostage or a corpse being moved away."

*Maybe it really happened in the middle of the night? Maybe they were able to go through walls? *Klein silently offered other possibilities in his mind, and he silently prayed.

May the Goddess bless Detective Isengard Stanton and that he escaped the disaster—the Evernight Goddess was the Empress of Disaster and Horror.

When the interrogation was over, Klein was remanded in a small room, and the police sent someone to pick up the letter as evidence with Lawyer Jurgen at 15 Minsk Street.

It wasn't until the evening that Klein was finally admitted bail, posting a sum of fifty pounds.

"It's much more expensive than the last time. It's difficult for the average private detective to produce that much cash in a short period of time." After leaving the Chissak Police Station, Klein pulled up the collar of his tweed coat and complained to Jurgen.

Jurgen still wore a professional and staid expression.

"The situation was favorable towards you the last time, but this time, much of the evidence points to you."

He stopped a rental carriage, turned his head to the side, and looked at Klein.

"Sherlock, I'm your lawyer. Before you answer the policeman's questions, it's best that you communicate with me, even if it's just sending me a look.

"Do not speak carelessly even if you feel that there are no problems. Ordinary people who haven't been trained will easily say things that trip them up."

This… I'm used to fabricating my own stories and solving my own problems… Klein recalled what had just happened and gave a hollow laugh.

"Okay, I will keep that in mind."

Without another word, Jurgen boarded the carriage.

Klein sat down across him and thought about Detective Isengard Stanton's attack.

As he was thinking, he suddenly heard the rumbling sound of his stomach.

It's already past my normal dinner time… Klein took out his gold pocket watch and opened it.

He didn't want to waste any more energy preparing food, so he began to think about which restaurant was worth looking forward to.

At that moment, Jurgen raised his eyelids and said, "I've asked my grandmother to prepare dinner for three."

"How can I impose on you?" Klein was startled for a moment before he laughed. "Mrs. Doris's cooking skills are always something to look forward to."

…

By the time they got back to Minsk Street in Cherwood Borough, the sky was completely dark and the street lamps were even brighter than the indistinct red moon in the sky.

After having dinner at the Jurgen's house and having fun with the cat, Klein strolled back to Unit 15 in the cold, damp air.

He habitually rummaged through the letterbox and pulled out a copy of the Backlund Evening News that had just arrived.

Klein opened the door with the newspaper in hand and just as he put the cane away, he realized something was wrong.

His spiritual intuition as a Seer told him that a stranger had entered his house!

Was it the police who came to collect the evidence? Klein looked around warily and suddenly saw a letter on the coffee table.

There should have only been newspapers sitting there!

Klein entered the living room warily, in preparation for an attack. He moved closer to the coffee table, and during the entire process, the surroundings were completely silent without the slightest abnormality.

Glancing down at the letter, Klein first took out a pair of black gloves and wore them before opening the letter.

There was a thin piece of paper inside the envelope. After unfolding it, a dark red color was immediately reflected in Klein's eyes, and the faint smell of blood lingered around his nose.

Words were written on the piece of paper with coagulated blood: "All of you will die!"

This… Is it really the owner of the Devil dog? Is he taking revenge on the people who caused his subordinate's death? This is truly a case of bullying the weak and fearing the strong. Why not directly find the Nighthawks responsible for the clean-up operation? Klein's heart tightened, and many thoughts flashed through his mind.

But he quickly dismissed his complaint. It was very normal to exact vengeance on the person that one could handle. Just like his past few months in Backlund, he had never thought of finding Ince Zangwill, but he never gave up his pursuit of Lanevus.

After looking around again, Klein gradually found that this matter was a little confusing.

Isn't he afraid of being caught by the official Beyonders by using such an ostentatious method to exact revenge? Is this the "acting" requirement for his potion?

Or, rather, because Detective Isengard Stanton escaped, he knows that he can't get rid of his targets in secret, so he can only switch his methods. But what's the reason behind this method?

Also, when I was at Detective Stanton's house, he was clearly watching me. Why didn't he make a move? Was he apprehensive towards an ordinary private detective like me?

No, impossible… Does he know that I'm a Beyonder? Possible. Due to the side effect of me getting lost due to the Master Key, I had met with the Devil dog. It saw my body and how I looked like. Although I was disguised, I can't be certain that a Devil can see through it…

Perhaps, after that incident, it was able to present the scene to its owner in some way…

However, at that time, I couldn't even defeat the Devil dog, so I could only run away pathetically. What is there to be afraid of? Unless he's worried about something else, such as the injured Isengard Stanton who might be hiding nearby?

Did he write to me very openly, thinking that I, a wild Beyonder, wouldn't dare to seek help from the officials?

With his head filled with questions, Klein inspected the house and walked all the way to the second floor.

When he opened the bedroom door, another letter came into view.

The letter lay quietly on the desk, as though it had been waiting for him for a very long time.

Klein opened the letter and saw a line of dark red words that were drawn: "You're next."

Next… How arrogant… Klein couldn't help but sigh.

At this moment, he suddenly had a thought. He raised his head and looked outside the window.

Across him were a few two-story houses with their lights on.

The glow of the street lamps fell on their outer walls, forming a crisscrossing zone.

All of a sudden, the shadows in the areas squirmed and twisted, forming a black shadow in a tailcoat.

The shadow raised its right hand, gesturing in the shape of a gun, and pointed it at Klein.

Then, it retracted its arm and blew at the "gun's muzzle."

Immediately after, it silently fell back, transforming into countless disconnected shadows.

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CHAPTER 413
VISITORS

Inside the Rice Police Station which was in charge of Minsk Street and the surrounding district.

Klein shook hands with the officer who escorted him out.

"This threatening letter must've had something to do with the previous serial murders. The organizer of the detective team, the great detective, Mr. Isengard Stanton, has already been attacked this afternoon!

"Please take it seriously."

The police officer retracted his hand and said, "Don't worry, Mr. Moriarty. We definitely won't ignore your suggestion and immediately report it to the higher-ups."

"Thank you so much." Klein put on his hat and walked out the door.

After seeing the two threatening letters and the provocation from the suspected Devil dog's master, Klein didn't hesitate to bring the evidence to the nearest police station to report the case. He secretly hoped that the matter would be transferred to the Mandated Punishers or the Machinery Hivemind Team as quickly as possible so that he could be placed under the protection of official Beyonders.

Although he no longer had any reason to keep his identity as a detective, being fully capable of giving up his residence at 15 Minsk Street and switching to another residence and identity, he suspected that this might have been the purpose of the author of that threatening letter.

Using the fear of wild Beyonders being exposed, the perpetrator was forcing him to flee under the cover of the night. Then, during this process, he could seize the opportunity to launch an attack.

*Actually, it's quite a suitable time to attack me while I was heading over to the police station to report the incident… It's the same as when I was at home… That fellow has other plans… *Confused and wary, Klein returned to Minsk Street.

As soon as he got out of the carriage, he saw a figure loitering in front of his house with the help of the street lamps amid the drizzle.

Klein's heart skipped a beat, but he immediately relaxed as he recognized the visitor.

It was Stuart, a slim private detective with a medium build, who adored him.

I can't be careless… What if the subsequent Sequences of Devil has a power similar to Faceless? Klein gripped his cane tight and slowly approached, then he gave a probing shout.

Detective Stuart abruptly turned his head and nervously said, "Mr. Moriarty, I received a threatening letter. It said: 'All of you will die!'"

"You received it as well?" Klein blurted out in surprise while also finding it understandable.

Stuart was also one of the detectives that Isengard Stanton had gathered for the investigation of the serial murders.

Stuart's eyes widened abruptly.

"You received it too?"

"Yes." Klein nodded seriously.

More than one actually… he added silently.

"What should I do? I first went to visit Mr. Stanton, but I heard that he was attacked, so I immediately came to you. Oh, thank God for His blessings. I was about to leave!" Stuart blurted out.

Klein pointed to the door.

"Let's talk inside."

After entering the living room, Klein excused himself to the bathroom and hurriedly went above the gray fog to perform two divinations. First, it was to confirm that the person was Stuart. And second, if there was any relatively serious danger that night. He received a revelation confirming both.

In other words, Stuart wasn't the enemy in disguise, and it would be a night of considerable danger.

Of course, that danger might not happen right in front of Klein, but someone might be wiped out in secret. That was the limitation of divination. All he could receive was a revelation of a certain degree, not the entire answer. He was unable to get a precise answer.

Furthermore, the limitations in mysticism couldn't be solved by techniques such as exclusion or dichotomy.

Returning to the real world, Klein pressed the mechanical button of the toilet bowl, and in the midst of the splashing water, he washed his hands and opened the door.

"Stuart, would you like coffee or tea?" Klein asked in a completely composed manner.

Stuart stood up and shook his head.

"No, we should discuss the problem first. Although I've received many threatening letters in the past, none of them can be compared to what I received today. He must've written them using fresh blood! My intuition tells me that he'll definitely take action, and that he has the ability to do so!

"By the way, Mr. Stanton was attacked by that same person, wasn't he?"

"I think so," Klein said stoically before sitting down. "This likely has something to do with the previous serial murders. The common thing that you, me, and Mr. Stanton share in common is that case."

Stuart's reaction is a little too extreme… Is he spooked out by the attack on Mr. Stanton? At the same time, Klein was carefully observing Stuart.

Being infected by his attitude, Stuart calmed down significantly. He sat down again and said while deep in thought, "It seems to be the case…"

Before he could finish his sentence, tinkling sounds suddenly echoed in the room.

Someone had rung the doorbell.

Stuart instantly jolted, like a frightened bird.

Klein frowned as he looked at him before getting up to head for the door.

As soon as he touched the handle, the scene outside appeared in his mind.

The visitors were Detective Kaslana in her gray tweed coat; her red-haired assistant, Lydia; and several other men who looked familiar.

They're all the private detectives who Mr. Stanton had assembled… As expected… As Klein recalled, he recognized the visitors.

He pulled open the door and took two steps back.

With bushy eyebrows and slightly drooping cheeks, Kaslana looked at Klein and Stuart who was behind him. Without exchanging pleasantries, she bluntly said, "We've all received the same threatening letter, so I believe you guys did too, right?"

"Yes," Klein replied solemnly.

Kaslana didn't shy away from exhaling a breath of white mist.

"We were all assembled by Mr. Stanton to participate in the investigation of the serial murders. That's the only thing we have in common."

"I think so too." Klein pointed inside his house. "Let's talk inside."

Watching the six private detectives enter, Klein quickly analyzed the intentions of the Devil dog's master.

To stir up such a huge commotion, this will soon attract the attention of the official Beyonder organizations. Who knows, there might be a demigod powerhouse guarding this area, so how would he take his revenge?

He's just being provocative, making the military and the Beyonders from the three Churches send people to protect all these private detectives. With the official Beyonders not daring to be negligent, it will scatter personnel and exhaust them by making them run around. Is all this to take revenge on the main target of the attack from back then?

In the process, he might even have a chance to kill some of the official Beyonders…

As for the private investigators, he will only take action much later, once their wariness has relaxed…

Of course, if probes such as this give an opening, then he definitely wouldn't let it go…

To Devils who can sense danger ahead of time, this is a method that plays on their strengths.

However, the three Churches, together with the military and the royal family, have many experts and Sealed Artifacts. They have no lack of demigods or Grade 0 and Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts. Is the master of the Devil dog so certain that there are no powers or items that can restrain this strength of his?

No, he definitely wouldn't dare.

The official powers, especially the Nighthawks, Mandated Punishers, and Machinery Hivemind, have been fighting Devils for who knows how many years. In the Fourth Epoch, even in the more ancient Third Epoch, there was no lack of similar deeds.

The master of the Devil dog is at most a Sequence 5. As long as anything goes wrong, to the point of nothing going wrong, he can be torn apart by a demigod or a terrifying Sealed Artifact. Why would he still dare to make such attempts?

Or it could be said that he's simply toying with the officials and that he wouldn't act, doing it time and time again…

Yes, there's another possibility. Using the threatening letter, he's able to get more than half the targets gathered together. Then, using the official Beyonder organizations' counterbalancing of each other and the procedural and bureaucratic tendencies, create a time delay…

The attack on Mr. Isengard Stanton must've been handed over to the Machinery Hivemind, who is in charge of supernatural affairs in Hillston Borough, but the ones who killed the Devil dog were mainly comprised of the Nighthawks. The two organizations definitely don't communicate in detail too much…

Well, it can also be assigned based on Mr. Stanton's faith… Which deity does he believe in… I don't seem to know, nor can I tell…

In short, with so many private investigators living in different districts and with different faiths, the division of jurisdiction is a troublesome matter, and joint operations aren't so easy to achieve.

At this moment, the ones protecting us should only be two or three groups of official Beyonders. At the very most, they would be at the level of deacons, and they wouldn't use Sealed Artifacts which are too powerful or dangerous. Even a demigod High-Sequence Beyonder wouldn't direct their gaze over to us that quickly.

This would give the Devil dog's master a chance.

Although three to four groups of official Beyonders can definitely kill one or even more than one Sequence 5, as long as he takes advantage of the situation, there's a good chance that he can successfully escape.

Klein was able to deduce two or three possibilities in just twenty to thirty seconds, and giving each of them a preliminary opinion.

Thinking of the divination outcome that indicated that there would be significant danger tonight, Klein thoughtfully nodded his head, closed the door, and entered the living room. He said to the sitting or standing detectives, "Have you called the police?"

There are almost half of the people, who were assembled back then, gathered here… he surveyed the detectives and muttered inwardly.

Representing the rest, Kaslana replied, "Some have called the police, while others have tried to find Mr. Stanton or familiar friends. Finally, all of us got together and discussed about visiting you, the great detective."

Klein gently nodded and deliberately said, "Everyone, don't be too nervous. The person who sent the letter should be trying to get revenge for that serial

murder, but he's only one person, with at most one or two companions. As for us, we have a total of eight detectives, all skilled in combat and shooting, so why should we be afraid of him?

"Besides, we were not the only ones assembled by Mr. Stanton, and it must be the same for those who received the threatening letters. They just didn't end up meeting you or come to visit me."

Upon hearing his words, Kaslana and her assistant, Lydia, revealed doubtful expressions, as if they were unsure of something.

Another detective took a deep breath.

"Mr. Moriarty, perhaps it's as you say, we need not be afraid of him.

"But he's a sinister snake lurking in the dark. No one knows when he will launch an attack, and no one can guard against it in advance. Furthermore, he might even harm our family members."

"Family members?"

"Oh, my wife!"

"No, my little angel!"

The detectives were instantly overwhelmed by their emotions as they exhibited exaggerated reactions.

Standing behind Klein, Stuart was trembling with fear and anger.

"No, I don't want that…” he murmured, almost losing control of his emotions.

Just as Klein and Kaslana attempted to calm them down, Stuart suddenly drew his gun and aimed it at the back of Klein's head!

His eyes were glazed over, and his emotions seemed to have completely overwhelmed him.

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CHAPTER 414
DESIRE APOSTLE

While Stuart was raising his gun to aim, Klein, who had long been on guard, had already detected it. He lunged forward at the same time as Stuart performed his series of actions.

Bang!

Stuart, who was clearly out of control, pulled the trigger, and the bullet grazed the side of a private detective's face as it hit the wall.

Instantly, the other detectives pulled out their revolvers as a result of the stress. It was as if they were looking at the enemy, turning the scene extremely chaotic.

Among them, Stuart and a private detective had flushed faces and bulging veins. Their eyes burned with a mixture of fear and anger, as though they had turned into so-called devils.

At this moment, Kaslana bellowed, "Stop!"

Her voice wasn't loud, but it was filled with awe. It made everyone's body tremble, and they subconsciously complied.

Although there was a brief moment of silence, everyone's mood didn't seem to improve. Klein had already rolled over to the other side and stood up with his revolver in his hand.

His mind raced, and he couldn't afford to hide his thoughts. He planned to rely on his hallucination ability to calm down the few visitors.

Suddenly, the doorbell rang.

Ding dong, ding dong!

A few of the private detectives suddenly became alert, and their eyes revealed a hint of lucidity.

The tinkling of the doorbell was like a bucket of cold water that poured over their heads.

Stuart looked at the revolver in his hand and mumbled in a daze, "What was I doing just now…”

The official Beyonders have made their move? Klein breathed a sigh of relief, approaching the door as he held his revolver.

The moment he held the handle, the image of the person outside appeared in his mind.

It was a man in a black coat and a hunter's hat. He had gray temples, and a thin face—Isengard Stanton.

The detective's face was somewhat pale, and his left arm was propped up near the shoulder.

He really is alright! Klein was delighted at first, but then he became cautious—he remembered the day when Nimblewright Master Rosago had transformed into a constable to knock at his door.

Klein placed his finger on the trigger, pulled the door open, and took two steps back.

Isengard Stanton smiled and nodded at him.

"Thank you for your visit this afternoon; otherwise, I might not have been able to continue playing hide-and-seek with that devil.

"You saved my life."

*This… Could it be that the correct interpretation of "a suitable date for visiting Isengard Stanton" is that by visiting him this afternoon, I was able to help him out of trouble? What about the next few days of "suitable dates for visiting?" By skirting around the murder scene, I wouldn't be suspected? *Klein didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

He didn't let his guard down as he made way.

"What exactly happened?"

"We'll talk later." Isengard suddenly lowered his voice and laughed. "Do you wish to discuss the subject of Beyonders in front of Stuart and the others?"

So here you are mentioning Beyonders to me so naturally? That's right, I was able to remain in a deadlock with the master of the Devil dog for more than ten minutes. That serves to prove that I'm no ordinary person… Besides, the suggestion I previously offered pointed straight at a Devil-turned animal… Klein quietly stayed behind Isengard Stanton by two steps.

Upon seeing this great detective, Kaslana and her assistant, Lydia, let out a sigh of relief. Stuart and the other private detectives also showed a look of relief.

"Are you alright, Mr. Stanton?" they asked.

Isengard slightly moved his left arm and said, "A little injured, but not too badly.

"Okay. Everyone, don't be nervous. This will be over soon. The police are waiting for that bastard in the darkness nearby."

"is it because of the serial murders?"

"Have you locked onto the suspect?"

"Will he hurt the innocent?"

…

The private detectives asked frantically.

Isengard pressed his right palm down.

"Don't worry, I'll tell you in detail in the time to come, but before that, I need to find out a few things from Sherlock and Kaslana. We'll head to the activity room for a few minutes."

His accumulated prestige made the detectives sit down without rebutting.

Although they were still worried, they no longer had the problem of fretting or suddenly losing control of their emotions.

After entering the activity room and closing the wooden door, Klein took a look at the enclosed room and suddenly thought of something.

This kind of environment is very suitable for using items like the Biological Poison Bottle!

Ahem… Klein cleared his throat, walked across the room, and opened the window.

He still didn't relax his wariness against Isengard Stanton, nor did he believe that Kaslana was absolutely trustworthy.

Isengard looked around, directly taking Klein's reclining chair before chuckling.

"Being old, I still like to sit like this."

Sitting on a single sofa, Klein asked again, "Mr. Stanton, what exactly happened?"

Isengard looked at Kaslana, who was standing behind a coffee table, and said, "We're all Beyonders, so I won't explain stuff pertaining to general knowledge."

"Beyonders?" Kaslana first looked at Klein, then at Isengard, slightly surprised but not all that shocked.

So it turns out that you're also a Beyonder… Why were you stumped by a weak ghost back then and unable to even discover the problem… Yes, perhaps she's from a Sequence that isn't good at dealing with shadows or wraiths… Klein responded to her gaze.

Isengard smiled and said, "I once went to the Lenburg for four years of studies, where I came into contact with the Beyonder world and became a believer of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom.

"After returning to Backlund, I gradually established a good relationship with the military, the Church of the Evernight Goddess, and the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, but I didn't dare to reveal my true identity, because the Mandated Punishers would definitely eliminate me as a cult's heretic. On this matter, the other official organizations wouldn't help me directly, because that would be equivalent to starting a war with the Church of the Lord of Storms.

"As expected of the Tyrant's Church."

"Tyrant?" Klein asked in passing.

Isengard took out his pipe, but only sniffed the tobacco.

"This is what our Church internally calls the Lord of the Storms.

"Alright. Let me first return to what happened today. The person who attacked me and delivered threatening letters to you is the master of the serial murderer from before. Heh heh, you should know that the murderer is a black dog of the Devil Sequence, especially Sherlock. You were the first to point out that the Devil might be an animal."

Klein smiled, neither denying nor admitting it. Kaslana also just clasped her hands together, not saying a word.

Isengard shook his head and laughed.

"Don't worry, I'm not an enforcer, but as a believer of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, I can't preach in Backlund or officially establish an organization. I can only rely on you and others like you for help."

In other words, you can help us take the blame? Klein mocked inwardly.

Isengard continued, seeing that they were still not making any admission.

"The Devil dog's master is a Sequence 5 expert. Yes, according to what I know, the Devil pathway's Sequence 5 is Desire Apostle. They can use and control everyone's emotions and desires, enticing them to be corrupted.

"When facing a Desire Apostle, one mustn't have feelings that are too intense. One mustn't make or exhibit overt desires; otherwise, they'll immediately be remotely controlled by him. Otherwise, a seed might be planted in them or have it catalyze immediately.

"This will make people exhibit many problems as they gradually become corrupted. They might also lose control of their emotions at a critical moment and be unable to put up any resistance… This is a portion of the Beyonder powers a Desire Apostle has. I have confirmed these aspects from my battle with him."

Upon hearing this, Klein suddenly understood one of the reasons why the culprit had sent out threatening letters and made such provocative actions.

He wanted to anger us, making our emotions experience violent changes so that he could bury a corruption seed or catalyze our emotions, making it erupt out of control!

This would make his follow-up attacks simpler and easier!

Fortunately, I'm a Beyonder who has experienced many things. At that time, all I had was vigilance and caution… When Stuart and the others saw the threatening letter, their emotions clearly changed, so the Desire Apostle had planted a seed in them…

If we hadn't been able to stabilize them in time, the situation would've become chaotic with the internal strife, giving the surrounding official Beyonders little time to react, and thus, giving the Desire Apostle ample opportunity…

*Back when I was in Isengard Stanton's house, I felt that time moved slowly. Was it a result of the magnification of my sudden increase in vigilance, tension, wariness, and other emotions? *

Klein thought back and felt lucky.

"So that's how it is…" Kaslana seemed to gain an understanding of many things.

Isengard rubbed his temples and said, "I was almost manipulated by him, which resulted in my injuries. Afterward, I used a mystical item to play hide and seek in the house. It was only when Sherlock visited and the three sides came to a stalemate did I get a chance to have a breather.

"My poor assistant was looking forward to returning to Lenburg for Mass on New Year's Day."

At this point, he sighed.

"When the police arrived, I took the opportunity to escape and then used the river to escape the pursuit," Isengard added. He then asked, "Sherlock, Kaslana, how do you plan on handling this issue?"

After a moment of silence, Kaslana said, "Mr. Stanton, do you have any suggestions?"

Isengard said, "First, take the protection of the official Beyonders, preventing the Desire Apostle from daring to take action. While this is happening, we should hope that he's quickly caught or killed.

"If our hopes aren't met, it's impossible that the official Beyonders would allocate people to constantly protect us. Then, we only have two choices. First, it's to change our identity, including our families' and move to a different place with their help. However, no one can guarantee that the Desire Apostle won't discover this. Second, we can directly join a corresponding official organization and become an external member. That way, our identity and place of residence will change as well, but it's much safer."

Join a corresponding official organization? The Machinery Hivemind? Or go to places like Lenburg or Masin to join the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom? Wouldn't I then come to have three last names—no, a believer of three Churches? Klein felt an inexplicable sense of absurdity.

He thoughtfully asked for advice, "Are there no other solutions?"

At the same time, there was no change in Kaslana's expression. It was unknown what she was thinking.

Isengard Stanton rubbed his pipe and said, "Yes, that is that we join forces to create an opportunity so that we can quickly find and detain the Desire Apostle.

"Of course, the perfect outcome would be us killing him directly."

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CHAPTER 415
THE RING

Klein didn't have too big of a response in regards to Isengard Stanton's suggestion. He looked at the tightly-closed door of the activity room and said, "As far as I know, a Devil can predict danger before we take action, and they can even determine the source of the danger, thus providing an effective response.

"It's hard to find and restrain him."

Isengard nodded slightly and said, "Yes, that's indeed the case, but this doesn't mean that there are no solutions."

"What solutions?" Kaslana immediately asked.

Isengard smiled and said, "I fought him head-on and witnessed his Beyonder powers of predicting danger, so I have a rough idea of its strengths and weaknesses.

"A Devil can indeed detect danger before it happens, and it can be done so for quite a significant period of time prior to the danger. As long as we make any plans and take decisive action that targets him, he would receive the corresponding premonition. Of course, it has to be something that can really harm him."

*No, the truth is that the strengths and weaknesses of different types of Devils are different. Some of them might only be capable of detecting danger ten to twenty minutes in advance… *Klein silently retorted, but he didn't say it out loud.

Isengard continued, "The flaw of premonition powers is that it can only detect the person and location of the danger, but it doesn't know the specific details. This gives us an opportunity to take advantage of it."

"What opportunity? I don't think we can trap a Devil that can predict danger," Kaslana asked incredulously.

Klein also nodded in agreement.

Of course, I can use the gray fog to deceive the Desire Apostle, making him unable to detect danger ahead of time. But the problem is, how can I expose the secret of the gray fog in front of others… Klein silently added a few words.

Isengard chuckled.

"It's true that it won't work normally, but the Beyonder world is full of incredible things.

"I'm a Sequence 7 Knowledge Keeper of the Reader pathway, also known as Detective. By honestly telling you this, it's a way of showing my sincerity in cooperating.

"In this situation, I think honesty is more important than anything else."

Only Sequence 7? How could a Sequence 7 escape from a Desire Apostle? It seems like Mr. Stanton has a powerful mystical item… Enlightened, Klein shifted in his seat.

"Does a Knowledge Keeper have the ability to suppress a Devil's premonition powers?" Kaslana asked with her body leaning forward.

"No," Isengard said with a laugh. "However, I have a ring. It originates from a Sequence 6 Rampager of the Reader pathway. It allows me to differentiate, recognize, remember, and mimic all the Beyonder powers I've

seen before. Of course, against more powerful Beyonder powers, the chance of failure is higher.

"Haha, there is a maxim in our Church, omniscience means omnipotence."

Why does it sound so familiar… Furthermore, the description of the item… Klein was about to run through his memories when he saw Isengard Stanton take out a gorgeous ring.

The ring was inlaid with many small diamonds. Together, they surrounded a beautiful emerald-green gem that looked like a human eye.

Just by looking at this ring, Klein felt dizzy, as if he had overworked his mind.

Isn't… Isn't this Sealed Artifact 2-081? Isengard Stanton is Old Mister Eye of Wisdom? Klein looked up in surprise at the detective sitting in the reclining chair.

That ring was the Sealed Artifact 2-081 which Eye of Wisdom had flaunted to him previously and had used several times in the Beyonder gathering!

Eye of Wisdom… This code name does sound like it's related to the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom… Klein, using his Clown's ability to control his expression as he looked quietly at Isengard Stanton.

In the end, he found that some of the outlines of the great detective did match Eye of Wisdom, but there were many details which were highly different.

His ability to disguise himself is very impressive… Was it done with the help of 2-081? Klein made a rough judgment.

At this moment, he suddenly thought of a scene.

If Mr. Stanton says, "Let all of us work together to resist the Desire Apostle, and the most important thing is honesty. I have already described my Sequence and mystical item. It's your turn." What should I say? Silently take out the Sun Brooch which he sold to me?

At that moment, wouldn't he be going, "Nice, so it's you, punk!"

While Klein was imagining things, Kaslana looked at the ring Isengard Stanton showed and asked in envy and puzzlement, "What power are you planning on mimicking to resist the Desire Apostle's ability to predict danger?"

Isengard curled the corner of his lips and chuckled.

"The premonition that Devils have towards danger."

At that moment, he looked like a hoary fox.

Ah? That actually works? Klein was instantly momentarily unable to figure out the intricacies.

Seeing Kaslana and Klein puzzled, Isengard laughed and explained, "First, which is what we're currently doing, draw up a plan that can actually harm the Desire Apostle and begin working on it.

"Second, the Desire Apostle will sense the danger and know that the danger comes from us and that it stems from this place.

"Third, as a Devil, without any advanced preparations, there are certain things that are instinctual to him that he cannot change. His first reaction is definitely to kill us or to exact revenge on us, and there will be certain changes to his body, after which he will consider whether the current situation is suitable for a counterattack or not, and whether he should choose to stay away from us.

"Fourth, by mimicking the Devil's premonition powers, I'll sense the threat of the Desire Apostle and grasp the source of danger, which is also his present location."

That's… some godly operation… Klein was quite surprised.

But what happens next? The Desire Apostle would run away as soon as he realizes that something is wrong. We won't even have time to chase after him… Doubts immediately arose in him.

Isengard looked at the two of them and smiled.

"According to my deductions, he must be hiding in our surroundings right now. No matter how good he is at remotely controlling the emotions of others, there must be a distance limit. And just now, he had led Stuart and the others to lose control of their emotions.

"After I escaped his pursuit, the reason why it took me so long to appear here was because I was discussing a plan with the Nighthawks, Machinery Hivemind, and the military. They will each send two to three squads who are in charge of monitoring the nearby districts. These districts all have their code names. Heh heh, this will all be within the Desire Apostle's expectations. Even if he senses the danger, he will only treat it as normal.

"As soon as I confirm his location, I will inform the official Beyonders, and they will rapidly seal off the corresponding areas and close in on him."

"But herein lies the problem. How are we to inform the official Beyonders? If we're unable to accomplish this within seconds, the Desire Apostle will escape. Of course, he might've fled when what he just did had failed," Klein said, in thought.

"If that's the case, we would be out of solutions as well. There's no plan that's absolutely perfect. We can only wait for a particular Sealed Artifact's activation process to complete. When the time comes, the Desire Apostle

might've already left Backlund, but he might return at any time," Isengard explained.

He then took out a golden palm-sized item. It looked like a miniature telegraph, but it also had a trumpet on it.

"This is a Sealed Artifact; it can allow my voice to sound out simultaneously up to a range of five kilometers," Isengard smiled as he introduced it. "Its negative effect is that once it's activated, all sounds within five kilometers will be transmitted to the user's ears for an extended period of time. Of course, I can mimic a Beyonder power to mitigate this effect."

After listening carefully, Kaslana frowned slightly.

"Since there are official Beyonders involved, there doesn't seem to be any need for our cooperation?"

Isengard carefully put on Sealed Artifact 2-081 and earnestly said, "In order to not alarm the Desire Apostle ahead of time, there's a void of power in the nearby district. If the target is really here, the three of us need to help each other to retain him as best as we can."

"I have no problem." Klein pondered for a moment before agreeing.

Kaslana also nodded and said, "Mr. Stanton, there's no need for you to explain so much. After all, we'll cooperate for our own sake."

"Haha, an explanation is part of the plan, and an agreement means that the operation is about to begin…" Isengard half closed his eyes.

The emerald-green gem on the ring of his right hand began to glow with a dark blue light.

Suddenly, Isengard Stanton stood up, pointing upwards with a grim expression.

"He's right here, upstairs!"

Klein and Kaslana stood up at the same time, one ready to snap a finger and light a match on the second floor to jump up there directly, while the other followed Isengard towards the door.

None of them expected the Desire Apostle to be so bold as to remain in the vicinity after the failure of the previous machination, right in 15 Minsk Street!

Maybe he was upstairs watching it all with a cold gaze while we were discussing the plan to deal with him! This thought suddenly popped up in Klein's mind.

At that moment, he saw Kaslana's eyes suddenly turn red, and her right hand formed a fist as she punched out at Isengard Stanton's back where his heart was!

This… Klein's pupils contracted as he instantly came to a realization of many things.

The reason why the Desire Apostle didn't flee was because he still had other plans set up!

He still had a seed of corruption in someone's heart that he didn't catalyze.

That person was none other than Kaslana!

One of the only three Beyonders here!

The reason why the unsuccessful attempt at instigating them was so easily resolved was to let their guard down and wait for the critical moment to make Kaslana lose control of her emotions!

The Desire Apostle's biggest target was still Isengard Stanton.

How crafty… Klein snapped his fingers, but it was only an Air Bullet that was fired at Kaslana.

At the same time, he shouted, "Be careful!"

Isengard had a lot of experience too. He didn't care what the situation was as he threw himself forward.

However, Kaslana ignored the bullet, allowing it to strike her arm and allowing blood to splatter everywhere.

Bam!

She punched Isengard in the back, throwing her entire body forward.

Kacha!

Klein heard the sound of bones breaking, and the point of contact was the spine.

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CHAPTER 416
TWO RIGHTS MAKE A WRONG

Kacha!

When Klein saw Isengard Stanton's back cave in, even he felt a faint pain in his spine.

Isengard fell to the ground with a thud, seemingly instantly losing consciousness from the pain.

Kaslana, on the other hand, stood in her original spot, gasping for breath with a blank look in her eyes. Her forehead was covered in cold sweat, and there was no follow-up attack.

It was as if she had just awoken from a long nightmare caused by her emotions. All the strength in her body had completely disappeared from her previous outburst.

Huff! Puff! Kaslana's body swayed, on the brink of collapsing.

Klein's eyes narrowed as he rushed up to Isengard Stanton in two steps.

He kneeled and tried to help him up.

Isengard, who was sprawled on the ground, cried out in pain, "Run!

"Don't worry about me!"

Obviously, he didn't think that a three-person group which instantly had one heavily injured member and another losing all her strength could retain the

Desire Apostle. Thus, he told Klein to immediately escape and meet up with the official Beyonders; otherwise, all three of them would die there and then.

At the same time, Isengard raised his right hand with difficulty, attempting to use some of his Beyonder powers so as to attract the attention of the official Beyonders who were quite a distance away.

As for the tiny "telegraph" with the trumpet, it had long since flown to the wall because of Isengard's fall.

Klein showed hesitation and just as he was about to make a decision, he saw a thick black "liquid" flowing down from the ceiling, quickly forming a pitch-black figure.

The figure seemed to be completely wrapped in a black curtain, only exposing a pair of cold blue eyes.

At the sight of him, Klein felt as if he was seeing the most intense emotions and desires of a living creature: fear, wrath, greed, jealousy, hunger, lust, etc.

The Desire Apostle didn't waste the situation he painstakingly created, and he entered the activity room almost immediately.

At this moment, out of the three-person team of detectives, Kaslana was exhausted from the outburst of emotions, while Isengard Stanton's spine was severely injured, causing him to lose his ability to partake in combat. Only Klein was left unscathed.

However, other than his revolver and Beyonder bullets, all of his mystical items were above the gray fog. Besides, he was facing a Sequence 5 Desire Apostle, a powerhouse capable of nurturing a Devil dog!

At that moment, the corners of Klein's lips curled up slightly.

His right hand, which had been placed on the wound on Isengard's back, abruptly swiped, causing the obvious depression to shift to the side and onto a rib!

The Magician's most miraculous Beyonder power: Damage Transfer!

It allowed a wound to be transferred once on a body, turning a serious injury into a minor injury, but it was unable to transfer the damage to other people or items!

When Klein saw that Isengard Stanton was injured, he had already thought of the subsequent countermeasures.

By first acting as if they were out of solutions to make the Desire Apostle appear, and then transfer the great detective's wound to leave him with only a slight fracture in his ribs, Klein believed that Isengard would then be able to deal with the Desire Apostle with him. It was a struggle for survival that all humans on instinct.

In this way, even if the Desire Apostle realized that something was amiss, it would be too late for him to escape. Once Klein completed the "treatment" and joined forces with the great detective, they would be able to stall the target until the official Beyonders arrived!

Almost at the same time, the ring that Isengard had pointed outwards began to produce greenness that was filled with vitality. A faint glow soon enveloped Isengard's body, allowing his wounds to quickly heal.

The fracture on his ribs was instantly healed.

The great detective's pain was real, but his helplessness was just an act!

However, this overlapped with Klein's help.

When the Desire Apostle who was about to take action saw this scene, his eyes suddenly widened, and his body stopped abruptly.

Being free from any ensnarement, he turned around and ran towards the window.

During this process, his body quickly collapsed into a sticky black liquid.

The liquid seeped into the ground, penetrated the wall, and disappeared.

Klein raised his right hand just in time to snap his fingers.

The Air Bullet went through the open window and shot outside, sending sparks flying everywhere. However, the Desire Apostle had completely disappeared.

He ran really fast, without any hesitation at all… Are you a Devil or not?… This will only make things worse in the future… The corner of Klein's mouth twitched as he turned to look at Isengard Stanton who had rolled around and stood up.

The great detective happened to look at him.

"You're capable of healing wounds?"

"You're capable of healing wounds?"

The two of them opened their mouths at the same time and asked the same question.

After looking at each other, Isengard shook his head and smiled bitterly, "I never expected that the trap I set would allow him to escape."

As he spoke, his ring began to glow, and he looked around to confirm that the Desire Apostle had already left.

Isengard then gave a brief explanation.

"I didn't have the chance to mimic the healing ability this afternoon. Later, I believed that I could use this to set a trap and make the Desire Apostle appear by making him think that I'm injured. Therefore, I deliberately bundled my wound in an exaggerated manner."

He pointed to the cushion that elevated his left arm to his shoulder.

"Sure enough, it worked. But I didn't expect you to be able to deal with serious injuries, and…" Isengard sighed softly.

As a result, both of them putting "healing" the injuries as their top priority. No one held back the Desire Apostle, so the moment he realized that something was wrong, he immediately fled.

Both Stanton and I had trump cards that the Desire Apostle didn't know about, and we wanted to use that to trick him. Who knew that we would cancel each other out and allow him to flee… Is this the so-called two rights make a wrong? Klein helplessly laughed.

"This is because we don't know each other well enough, and we didn't have good teamwork."

"No, it's my fault," Isengard said sincerely. "When I saw that you didn't run away or defend yourself, and instead came over to help me, I should've deduced that you weren't flustered, that you had the confidence and means, but unfortunately while wearing this ring, my brain remained in a highly-taxed state. I wasn't able to consider anything else."

So Sealed Artifact 2-081 will passively reduce one's intelligence… Klein smiled and said, "Mr. Stanton, it's not the time to discuss who's responsible. The Desire Apostle has already fled. We should consider our subsequent actions."

Isengard took off his ring and turned to the door of the activity room.

"The official Beyonders are arriving soon. I'll go outside to calm Stuart and the others. After that, we can come up with a plan. Are you joining me, or do you plan on handling some of your matters?"

The official Beyonders… Mr. Stanton previously mentioned the Nighthawks, the Machinery Hivemind, and the military… Please don't be an acquaintance… Yes, my spiritual intuition hasn't warned me, so it's probably not… Mr. Stanton is giving me a chance to clean up and dispose of any sensitive items so that I don't get into trouble with the unfriendly official Beyonders… Many thoughts flashed through Klein's mind as he asked, "Mr. Stanton, when you grasped the Desire Apostle's location, where was he?"

Isengard thought and said, "Your bedroom. He was sitting in front of your desk."

…How arrogant.… Klein pointed out the door and said, "I'll head over there to investigate. I'll see if he left behind any traces.

"If we can figure out what the Desire Apostle truly looks like, it'll definitely make apprehending him much simpler.

"I'll leave the rest to you."

"Alright." Isengard moved to the side and helped up the weak Kaslana.

Seeing this, Klein suddenly found it amusing.

Having discussed so much and made preparations to set up a trap, we still failed to retain the Desire Apostle and ended up in this state… There are always more accidents than preparations… That's why Magician is just a Sequence 7…

After leaving the room, Klein went straight to the second floor and entered his bedroom.

The arrangement inside remained unchanged, and even the distance between the chair and desk was no different from before. However, Klein seemed to see a figure wrapped in a pitch-black liquid.

He sat there, looking straight ahead, waiting patiently and calmly for a chance.

As expected of a Coldblooded… Klein looked at the glass panes of the oriel window and felt that he could divine if it had reflected something.

The Devil pathway is good at crime, so it wouldn't be so easy for him to leave clues behind… However, I can try going above the gray fog to give it a try… Klein inspected the area and began to burn some of the mysticism notebooks he wrote in passing.

Not long after he finished dealing with the items, he saw a few strangers coming up to the second floor.

The leader of the group was a man with a stiff face but a head of frizzled, messy, and stubborn brown hair.

In his hand was an ancient silver mirror with strange patterns. On both sides of the mirror there were black gems which were decorated as "eyes."

"Hello, Mr. Moriarty. I am Ikanser Bernard of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery. Can I inspect this place?"

Klein immediately nodded and said, "No problem."

He then politely said, "Do you need me to follow you and answer any of the questions you might have?"

"Alright. Sorry for the trouble. Mr. Stanton has mentioned to me about your situation," Ikanser said with a smile.

Several of his team members followed behind him. They treated him differently—some ignoring him, some curious, some filled with hostility.

*My situation? How exactly did Mr. Stanton introduce me and what story did he make up? *As his thoughts raced, Klein followed Ikanser into the bedroom again, while the rest of the official Beyonders paired up, each responsible for a different zone on the second floor.

"This is where the Desire Apostle sat?" Ikanser pointed at the chair in front of the desk.

He had clearly asked Isengard Stanton.

"Yes," Klein answered frankly.

Without another word, Ikanser raised the silver mirror and stroked its surface three times with his right hand.

After a short pause, he said in a deep voice, "Honorable Arrodes, my question is: 'What did the Devil who was previously sitting here look like?'"

The lights around them suddenly turned dark, as if enshrouded by mist after a rainstorm. A strange aqueous glint appeared on the surface of the silver mirror, forming a scene: a man covered in a sticky black "liquid" sat on a chair with his back to the window while he faced the bed.

Immediately after, the scene changed. The mirror in the corner vaguely reflected the dark shadow's side profile which was similarly covered by the "pitch-blackness."

But he could vaguely make out an outline.

The Desire Apostle had very high cheekbones and a pair of cold-looking blue eyes.

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CHAPTER 417
ARRODES

Seeing the scene in the silver mirror, Klein revealed a pensive expression.

This mirror is very powerful, and it even has its own name. It seems to be a living Sealed Artifact…

Such items might not be too harmful, but the difficulty of sealing it is very high. It's seldom used except for special situations. This person named Ikanser Bernard from the Machinery Hivemind seems to be highly-ranked. He should be a deacon, and definitely not a simple one at that…

Divination is limited, so the outcome would almost be the same as the result shown by the silver mirror. Even if I were to go above the gray fog, I wouldn't obtain a better result.

There's no way to determine the Desire Apostle's appearance. There are countless people in Backlund with high cheekbones and blue eyes…

As Klein was in the midst of his thoughts, the scene produced by the silver mirror quickly dispersed.

Following that, words in blood-red appeared.

"Based on the principle of reciprocity, it's my turn to ask the question. If you lie or are unable to answer, you will have to accept an arranged mission by me or suffer a penalty."

"…” Klein pricked up his brows when he saw that.

Is this some Truth or Dare mirror? Interesting…

The words which resembled dripping blood slowly changed into new characters, forming a new sentence: "What is Red Light's true name?"

Red Light? One of the leaders of the Great White Brotherhood? One of the seven pure lights above the spirit world? Klein thought through it carefully and realized he didn't know the answer.

He only knew of Yellow Light, Venithan.

Ikanser's throat bobbed up and down as sweat gradually appeared on his forehead.

After a brief moment of silence, he said in a deep voice, "Nanides!"

"Wrong." The blood-red words on the mirror changed again. "Mission or penalty?"

There was an obvious struggle on Ikanser's face. Finally, he breathed out and said, "Penalty."

Just as he finished speaking, a streak of silver-white lightning appeared out of nowhere and struck his head.

With sizzling sounds, Ikanser's hair stood on their ends, and his body collapsed with a thud. Small amounts of black smoke billowed from his body.

However, the mirror didn't fall to the ground with him. Instead, it floated by itself and landed on the desk.

After two seconds, Ikanser staggered to his feet and sat there, panting while shaking.

Klein looked at everything in silence, unsure of how to react.

After a while, Ikanser, who had recovered a little, looked at him and said with a forced smile, "You should have heard of Sealed Artifacts and know that they come with certain negative effects."

"Yes." Klein looked at the standing hair on Ikanser's head and suddenly understood why his hairstyle was so frizzled, messy, and stubborn.

Klein couldn't help but say, "Actually, you could do the questioning alone. There's no need for you to do it in front of me."

"Phew, the requirement of using this mirror is that there must be someone watching by the side." Ikanser was still trembling.

It's so sentient… Klein took two steps forward and came to the table. He carefully looked at the silver mirror out of curiosity and found that, apart from the strange patterns and two decorative eyes, there was nothing special about the Sealed Artifact.

Ikanser, whose side was facing him, trembled as he chuckled.

"You can pose questions to him. We don't mind."

"No, I don't have any intention to." How could Klein play Truth or Dare with something like an ouija board?

As he spoke, he tried to touch the edge of the silver mirror.

It's ice-cold to the touch and has a metallic feeling… As Klein had this thought, he saw the ancient silver mirror tremble slightly.

White words quickly appeared on it: "Your loyal and humble servant, Arrodes, at your service."

Ah? Klein's mind momentarily went blank.

Then, he left the table without any change in expression.

What's going on? This mirror was still playing Truth or Dare with others in a very cold and ruthless manner just a moment ago… How did it become like this in the blink of an eye? Klein was amused and puzzled.

He quickly made a guess based on the information he had gathered.

The silver mirror knows Red Light's true name, so it seems to be related to the spirit world to a certain extent…

And the mysterious space above the gray fog seems to be connected to the spirit world as well. At the very least, when I summon myself, I will be able to see what appears to be the spirit world after passing through the door…

Is this mirror named Arrodes able to sense the aura of the gray fog?

While these thoughts were flashing through his mind, Klein saw that Ikanser had recovered and stood up once again. He grabbed the ancient silver mirror while the other two members in the room also stopped pretending that they hadn't seen anything while they were aimlessly searching the room.

After a series of inspections, Klein bade Ikanser and company farewell and found Isengard Stanton who had returned to the activity room.

"What do we do next?" he asked directly.

Isengard replied with a solemn expression.

"Let's have Stuart and the others have their families move in together. It will make it easier to protect them. However, this can only be a short-term solution.

"You and I, as well as Kaslana, will act normally and receive secret protection. Let's hope the Desire Apostle can be found as soon as possible.

"You're a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery, right?"

"Yes," Klein replied as he drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

At the same time, he lamented a little.

For the foreseeable future, I can only go above the gray fog while inside the bathroom…

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Earl Hall.

Audrey glanced at the elegantly-shaped wall clock and slowly sat down in front of the dressing table despite her nervousness and excitement.

She was heading to the home of her psychology teacher, Escalante, and take the key step of becoming an official member of the Psychology Alchemists.

Before doing so, she needed to time herself well before praying to Mr. Fool for his help.

I should be able to see the angel this time, right? Audrey thought with anticipation.

After a few seconds of silence, she clasped her hands together in front of her mouth and nose and softly chanted the honorific name of The Fool.

In 15 Minsk Street, Klein was standing in the living room, looking at the scene which had finally turned quiet as he sighed.

To him, the Desire Apostle only meant danger, but to Stuart and the others, it was a change in their lives.

I hope it can be settled as soon as possible… With so many Beyonders with so many Sealed Artifacts, there must be something effective against the Devil pathway… In the midst of his thoughts, Klein suddenly heard a series of illusory pleas.

It should be Miss Justice… Having been prepared, he looked around before walking to the bathroom as if nothing had happened.

After locking the bathroom door, he couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

My life has also changed a little…

Before the threat of the Desire Apostle was eliminated, he had to reduce the times he went above the gray fog while being secretly protected by the Machinery Hivemind.

Next week, during the Tarot Club, the itinerary must be simplified. However, no matter how compressed it is, it'll still take nearly ten minutes. Well, constipation is a very normal thing. Who says that Beyonders can't be constipated? Being optimistic, Klein took four steps counterclockwise and went above the gray fog.

Next, Audrey followed what she had been previously taught and set up a simple ritual, entering the "artificial sleepwalking" state.

When Klein saw her blurry figure inside the crimson star, he went through the procedure: first using his Spirit Body to contain the Dark Emperor card, then picking up the paper figurine he cut with his improved cutting skills, and sending it out.

As expected, the paper figurine gathered the power that was being stirred out of the gray fog, turning into a gigantic angel with twelve pairs of black wings.

Audrey watched as the sacred and majestic angel descended before her, wrapping herself in its layers of wings. She was left speechless for quite some time.

This is an angel, Mr. Fool's angel… And it even has twelve pairs of wings, an archangel! This is exactly the same as the descriptions in the legends of canon… This is also an angel of our Tarot Club! Audrey watched as the

angel's silhouette rapidly faded away. She suddenly felt that it was exceptionally sweet.

She thanked Mr. Fool with joy, excitement, and piousness, and then she called the maids and told them to get ready for her trip outdoors.

Klein smiled and returned to the living room, looking at the bullet hole in the wall and lost himself in thought.

Should I hang a cheap oil painting to cover it or repair it and paint over it?

…

In Escalante's house at Hillston Borough, Seventh Avenue.

Audrey left her maid and bodyguard in the living room and followed the mistress of the house into the activity room with Susie, her huge golden retriever.

In the activity room, there were two other people waiting. One of them was Hilbert Alucard, the psychologist who was introduced to her by Lady Norma. The other was Stephen Hampres who had organized the previous psychology discussion.

At that moment, although it was already time for the banquet, there was only a single ordinary candle lit in the room.

The candle was placed in the middle of the coffee table as its faint yellow flame flickered, dispersing the darkness in the activity room.

After greeting each other, Hilbert, with his slightly brown skin that was thanks to the tiny bit of Southern Continent blood in him, glanced at Susie, but he didn't say a word.

Audrey smiled apologetically and said, "I feel more secure with it around."

Susie also looked at Hilbert with innocent eyes.

"Understandable. Please have a seat." Hilbert smiled and sat down on the sofa on the other side of the coffee table. Hampres and Escalante also took their seats.

After Audrey had taken her seat, Hilbert lifted the candle wick to brighten it a little.

He looked at Audrey through the candlelight.

"Now answer me honestly. Are you sure you want to join the Psychology Alchemists?"

Under the illumination of the candlelight, his eyes seemed to be dyed with a hint of gold. Deep within his pupils, there seemed to be another eye, a vertical eye.

Audrey's mind suddenly turned adrift for a moment before she regained her senses. She lightly nodded and said, "Yes."

Hilbert asked again, "Will you intentionally hurt the Psychology Alchemists?"

His tone carried a strange inducement, as though as long as the person being questioned gave an affirmative answer, they would unwittingly agree and abide by it from the bottom of their hearts.

"No," Audrey answered very logically.

After a few questions, Hilbert, Escalante, and the others heaved sighs of relief.

The former smiled and asked, "Is there anything else you would like to say?"

Audrey hesitated for a moment and then displayed her sincerity.

"I once purchased the Spectator formula at a Beyonder gathering. I-I'm already a Spectator."

That Beyonder gathering is called the Tarot Gathering… Audrey thought to herself proudly.

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CHAPTER 418
THE POWER OF THE MIND

Audrey knew that her mind and psyche were being influenced by some kind of Beyonder power. It was only because of the "Angel's Blessing" provided by Mr. Fool that she was able to miraculously be immune to that state. Therefore, she decided to set certain things in motion, using small secrets to stun her counterparts, so as to hide the more crucial matters, in return for obtaining greater trust.

The reason why she was doing this wasn't because she didn't believe in the angel, but because she felt that she could observe her counterparty just like how they were observing her.

Although she had always "hidden" herself in the "dark" and pretended to not be considered a Beyonder, performing in a way which would not arouse suspicion, she was still more willing to take the members of the Psychology Alchemists seriously. After all, they were professionals, and she could only be considered a dabbler in the Beyonder circle. She lacked the experience and wasn't flexible enough. It was very possible that she would expose certain problems from things she had yet to realize.

In that case, she might as well take this opportunity to "confess" and completely dispel some of the doubts of the Psychology Alchemists' members.

She had called the descent of the angel and its envelopment of her with its wings as a "blessing."

Upon hearing Audrey's reply, both Escalante and Hampres showed a brief look of surprise. For a moment, they even doubted their own powers.

As for Hilbert, he curled the corners of his lips into a faint smile, showing no abnormal reaction.

He nodded in satisfaction and gently said, "Your honesty is admirable.

"Anything else?"

Audrey pretended to be in a trance as she shook her head.

"There isn't anything else."

Hilbert thought for a moment before asking a few more questions.

"Which Beyonder gathering did you buy the Spectator formula from? Who did you buy it from? Where did you get the ingredients for concocting the potion?"

Audrey's eyes darted around slightly as she showed an expression of recalling.

"I have to keep the Beyonder gathering a secret.

"I was unable to see what the person who sold me the Spectator formula looks like. But from the way he speaks, I could determine that he was a believer of the Lord of Storms."

Upon hearing that, Hilbert nodded slightly, as though he recalled something.

Audrey continued, "My Spectator potion ingredients were mainly found from my family's vault. The rest were exchanged from my few friends."

Two Spectator potions… she added silently.

Most of them were found from her family's vault… Hilbert, Escalante, and Hampres ruminated over the words, momentarily at a loss for words.

After a few seconds, Hilbert nodded to Escalante and Hampres, indicating that he found everything alright.

After receiving the same reply from the rest, the gold tinge in his eyes faded, and the vertical pupil in his eyes faded rapidly.

Hilbert touched the wick of the candle again, causing the flame to flicker.

In that instance of alternating light and darkness, Audrey discovered that the strange power that affected her had suddenly disappeared.

She controlled her adrift expression and switched to an appearance of doubt and inquiry.

"I didn't expect you to already be a Spectator." Hilbert chuckled.

"Huh?" Audrey showed her surprise and panic at the right moment.

Knowing what kind of emotional reaction to show in the appropriate situation and knowing, in detail, what kind of expression and body language to react with was the basic skill of a Telepathist.

Hilbert smiled and said, "There's no need to be nervous. We don't mind. That was the last of our tests.

"Congratulations, you have passed all the tests. Now, you're an official member of our Psychology Alchemists."

"Alright then…” Audrey hesitated, then she smiled. "It felt like a dream."

She then stood up, lifted the edges of her skirt, and bowed at Hilbert and the others. She then said with a faint smile, "We are now companions."

Escalante and the others immediately stood up and bowed to the beautiful girl of noble status who was so polite to them.

After the two sat back down, Hilbert organized his words and said, "Miss Audrey, I'm going to formally explain to you about the situation of the Psychology Alchemists."

"Alright," Audrey said with a smile. "Just call me by my name."

Hilbert nodded. Leaning back, he crossed his right leg and clasped his hands.

"The original Psychology Alchemists was just a seminar for enthusiasts who all believed that the mind has limitless power and infinite wonders.

"Later on, this seminar obtained a treasure map and found the relics left behind by Hermes."

"Hermes of the Hermes language?" Audrey asked in excitement.

"Yes, he was one of the earliest masters of mysticism from the human race, and the language of ancient Hermes that he created resonated with the power of nature. He was active during the dark Second Epoch. Back then, humans were only the servants and slaves of giants," Hilbert said with utmost reverence.

He let out a soft sigh.

"The original members of the Psychology Alchemists found a lot of things from the ruins. They discovered that Hermes was a mysticism master in the field of the mind. His research target was the dragons that ruled the sky during the Second Epoch. To be precise, the dragons of the mind.

"The information he left behind shows that mind dragons have advanced far into this field and have achieved the same level of achievement as deities."

I know. The Dragon of Imagination Ankewelt was an ancient god… Audrey thought quite complacently.

Hilbert sighed and said, "Those materials laid the foundation and direction for the research of our Psychology Alchemists.

"We believe that the mind has many secrets and that every one of them is hidden somewhere deep and difficult to grasp. Heh, forgive me for using the adjective 'deep,' which seems to be the most appropriate term to me.

"The slightest mistake in the study of those secrets would cause irreversible harm to the body. Audrey, you have to remember that matters in this aspect needs to be done carefully."

After Audrey nodded, he continued.

"If we can unravel the secrets of the mind, then we can, on the one hand, unearth the power hidden deep in one's consciousness, and accomplish many miraculous deeds, and on the other hand, we can influence or even control the minds of others.

"After reaching this level, what lies ahead is the sea of gathered collective subconsciousness, which is the place we look forward to the most. Of course, the description of a collective subconsciousness isn't accurate enough; I prefer to call it the 'mind world of all living beings.' It has a veiled and miraculous connection to the spirit world."

"If one can master this 'mind world,' what kind of Beyonder powers would we obtain?" Audrey showed her curiosity at the right moment and her lack of knowledge in this area.

Hilbert smiled and said, "You should've noticed some of the wonderful phenomena in the real world. When we wish to receive something, it will happen to appear. When we want to visit a friend, they will happen to knock on the door. And when we desire something to happen, it begins at that exact moment.

"You might say it's a coincidence, but sometimes there are too many coincidences. Our research shows that many of these coincidences are

caused by an unconscious, magical influence of the mind.

"When you master the 'mind world,' which is also the sea that gathers the collective subconscious, then you will master 'coincidences,' creating magical phenomena that make chance appearances as an echo of your mind. It will appear as you wish."

"Th-this is too amazing." Audrey had heard The Sun mention the Dragon of Nightmare before, but the description was far less detailed than Hilbert's.

Hilbert chuckled and said, "At our level, it's better not to discuss such a deep and profound question. If we do, we'll easily lose ourselves. I'll continue introducing the Psychology Alchemists.

"The discovery of the ruins marked the establishment of the organization. The members at the beginning wanted to maintain a state of pure academic discussion, but they would always need help when encountering matters. Similarly, they lack items and research materials. That's why the Psychology Alchemists slowly became systematic and transformed into a real secret organization.

"However, compared to other secret organizations, our structure and relationships are still relatively loose."

"That's what I like about it," Audrey expressed her opinion.

Hilbert explained the main rules and regulations, before finally concluding, "When you reach a higher rank, you'll be able to meet the other members.

"I'll now give you the Sequence 8 Telepathist potion."

They did prepare a Telepathist potion as expected… Audrey was both glad and proud.

After seeing the lustrous potion, she hesitated and said, "I wish to consume it after I get back."

She still doesn't trust us, and she wishes to make confirmation… Hilbert read Audrey's thoughts and replied with a smile, "Okay.

"With your performance, drinking the Telepathist potion shouldn't be a problem."

Audrey beamed and thanked him before asking a probing question, "Can you give me the potion formula to Psychiatrist? I wish to seek out and gather the ingredients, ahead of time, so that I don't waste any time."

…When other people join the Psychology Alchemists, other than hoping to get a formula, don't they hope to apply for the corresponding Beyonder ingredients? Who says it in such a carefree manner and talk about trying to gather them ahead of time? Hilbert, Hampres, and Escalante were speechless for a while as they looked at the girl who spoke of such things with a normal tone.

A few seconds later, Hilbert forced out a smile.

"I'll help you make the application.

"Normally, this would require contribution points, and contribution points come from the missions we assign you, the research contributions you make, and the new information and materials you gather."

"Okay, I'll do my best," Audrey said briskly.

She remained silent after leaving Escalante's house, but only until she entered her room and sent Annie and the others away did she turn to the huge golden retriever and smile.

"Susie, we got your potion~!"

It's a pity that the Rainbow Salamander that Alfred found for me couldn't be of use. It can only be exchanged for money… Audrey sighed emotively in her heart.

Susie looked at the bottle containing the Telepathist potion and wagged her tail cheerfully.

Audrey had hung a pair of gold-rimmed glasses around her neck just for laughs.

…

Hillston Borough. In Isengard Stanton's house.

Klein had been invited to breakfast. Apart from him, Kaslana was invited as well.

After eating a mouthful of the soft potato pie, Klein praised, "Mr. Stanton, your cooking skills are excellent."

Isengard, who had gray hair at his temples, smiled and said, "It's a specialty of Lenburg. And to the Beyonders of the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, being multi-talented is a common trait. Its Sequence 6 is called Polymath.

"It's easy for people to lose control for the corresponding potion. Until now, I still don't have the confidence to make the advancement attempt."

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CHAPTER 419
WISHING

Polymath… This Sequence sounds strong just from its name… The Reader pathway's Sequence 7 is called Knowledge Keeper or Detective. It's a "job" that leans towards grasping knowledge and deduction. At most, it would be accompanied by decent combat techniques and the ability to use machinery, so it cannot be considered powerful. But at Sequence 6, there seems to be a sudden qualitative change, especially more so in the field of Beyonder combat… From the looks of it, each Beyonder pathway has its own critical point below the High Sequences, but it isn't fixed at a particular Sequence. For example, the Seer pathway's critical point is Magician… Klein drank a mouthful of hot coffee and didn't try probing on the secrets to other Sequences. Instead, he smiled and said, "Mr. Stanton, you seem to be quite relaxed. You're not nervous or worried at all."

Isengard didn't answer immediately. He put down his knife and fork, took out his pipe, and said, "You don't mind, right?"

Actually, I do, but the pollution and smog in Backlund is already so bad that a few more puffs of secondhand smoke won't make it any worse… Klein shook his head and smiled.

"This aids in your thinking?"

"More accurately, it's a habit that I have after breakfast every day." Done with his pipe, Isengard took a deep drag.

As the smoke was exhaled, he sighed and said, "Fear, nervousness, and worry doesn't help us face the threat. In that case, why not take it a little

easier? The brain will become more active because of this. My assistant easily got worried which led to his fatal disaster. Sigh…”

Isengard glanced at Kaslana and continued, "Furthermore, our opponent is a Desire Apostle. We have to refrain from having intense emotions."

Having said that, he chuckled.

"Most importantly, we have no other means of locating the Desire Apostle."

"What do we do?" Kaslana put down the last piece of bacon and asked seriously.

Isengard took a drag and said in a self-deprecating manner, "When discussing topics like this, I prefer reclining chairs.

"Apart from being able to sense danger, Devils aren't good at divination or premonition. Therefore, if a Desire Apostle wishes to figure out the main revenge target, he would need to actively investigate and gather information. Otherwise, how would he know which group of private detectives had made considerable contributions to the serial murder? How was he able to precisely pinpoint you and me?

"In such a process, he definitely would've interacted with many people. Even in a disguise, he's bound to leave some clues. In addition to the rough image given by the Machinery Hivemind, this will form clues.

"Similarly, if he wants to attack me, then he has to find out where I live, what are my entry and exit patterns, as well as when I work or rest. He also needs to know if there are powerful official Beyonders protecting me. This requires a considerable observation period and corresponding inquiries, and similarly, this means interacting with others and certain locations. Heh heh, once there's an interaction, there will be clues.

"I like the maxim: wherever he steps, whatever he touches, whatever he leaves, even unconsciously, will serve as a silent witness against him."

I know that sentence. It was said by Emperor Roselle… Klein smiled.

Soon after, he felt a little despondent, because this was the second time he heard someone mention this maxim in this world.

The last time it happened was when he was in Tingen.

Kaslana, whose cheeks were drooping, sighed.

"As expected of a great detective. I never thought about such things. I admire your observation and reasoning skills."

Isengard responded with a smile, "Everyone has their own areas of expertise. If it's just fighting, then I would be defeated by you again and again.

"Sherlock must've also thought of the things I just said. He also has outstanding observation and reasoning skills, and he's an outstanding detective."

Actually, I felt a little ashamed when you were speaking so confidently earlier… Klein squeezed out a smile.

"No, you're a true detective, and I'm still a long way off."

"You really are a modest young man." Isengard sighed.

He smiled and said, "Next up, we'll proceed by taking these points in mind. You'll have to use your own resources and information channels."

Aside from the Tarot Club, a third of my resources and information channels in Backlund are from you, my good old man… Klein forced a smile and replied, "Alright."

Apart from the Beyonder gathering held by Eye of Wisdom, the only people he could seek help from were Maric, Miss Sharron, Vampire Emlyn White,

and Father Utravsky.

With the Machinery Hivemind secretly protecting me, I'll have to eliminate Miss Sharron and Maric… I can visit Emlyn the vampire as he's now a half-believer of Mother Earth, and is under the protection of Bishop Utravsky. He wouldn't encounter any danger from the official Beyonders… Klein instantly decided on the direction to take.

Kaslana remained silent for a few seconds before replying, "No problem."

Klein wiped the remaining cream onto the last bit of toast, chewed, and swallowed it at a leisurely pace before asking, "Mr. Stanton, you previously mentioned the activation of a particular Sealed Artifact. Will it be able to help us deal with the Desire Apostle?"

"Yes, it played a critical role in finding and surrounding the Devil dog back then," Isengard replied frankly. "Its code name is 1-42."

1-42? A Grade 1 Sealed Artifact is highly dangerous and can only be used in limited ways. Even the Backlund diocese can only keep one or two items… A corresponding description flashed across Klein's mind, and he asked with great interest, "What is it? What abilities and negative effects does it have?"

Isengard laughed and said, "That is a secret of the Church of the Evernight Goddess. I do not know, and I only know that it was originally not in Backlund. It was rushed here as an emergency because of the serial murders.

"It is said that it's a full-body armor which is silver in color with dark-red blood stains. It once caused the destruction of a small city, and over a hundred thousand people died because of it."

"Cursed armor?" Klein asked in return by giving it a name.

Isengard spewed a mouthful of smoke and shook his head in seriousness.

"Perhaps it isn't cursed. Some people call it 'Berserker's Armor' or 'Bloodthirster's Armor.' My Church once guessed that the blood it's stained with comes from a deity from ancient times.

"When it was first discovered, it appeared to be nothing out of the ordinary. It was treated as a simple antique, sold and collected by others.

"But as time passed, those who came into contact with it died, one after another. It was an extremely terrifying death, nearly to the point of dismemberment, and after that, with it as the center, death spread outwards. There was no longer any need for contact, and as such, a small city was destroyed.

"This happened early in the Fifth Epoch. The Nighthawks were responsible for the aftermath."

As expected of a Beyonder from the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom. He knows enough history and Beyonder events… Klein secretly praised.

Kaslana asked, sounding a little worried, "Will it bring us danger?"

"The Church of the Evernight Goddess definitely found the right way of sealing it, but for us, it's best if we avoid contact as much as possible," Isengard said, half as consolement and half as a warning.

After breakfast, he and Klein went into the activity room where the fight had taken place. Kaslana first headed to the bathroom.

Looking at her back, Klein thoughtfully said, "She seems to be a Beyonder from the Arbiter pathway?"

"Your observation skills are indeed outstanding." Isengard sat down in the reclining chair.

As Klein walked to the sofa, he whispered in confusion, "This pathway is strictly controlled by the royal family, the military, and the ancient nobles. Very few formulas and ingredients appear in the outside world. Kaslana has such a background?"

Isengard smiled and said, "Quite obviously.

"However, even to this point, she hasn't taken the initiative to mention the relevant matters. This implies that there really is a reason that makes it somewhat inconvenient for her to mention it."

He looked at Klein with a smile in his eyes, as if to say: *"aren't you the same as well?"*

Klein laughed dryly and sat down.

After a while, Kaslana came to the activity room and continued discussing the matter regarding the Desire Apostle with Klein and Isengard.

As she was speaking, her expression suddenly became gloomy and she sighed.

"I was pulled into the most dangerous case this time. I have no idea if I'll survive this at the end. I-if I were to be killed by the Desire Apostle, I wish to have this on my tombstone: 'She had a great mother.'"

Kaslana's voice gradually lowered as her difficult-to-get-along-with personality seemed to soften.

Isengard shared the same sentiments and nodded.

"Similarly, he's the most dangerous enemy I've encountered."

He then laughed and said, "If I die because of this, and both of you are still alive, would you be willing to help me deliver my remains to the Holy Temple of Knowledge in Lenburg?"

*… Stop raising death flags! *Klein's mouth was half open, and he didn't know how to stop the two detectives in front of him.

"No problem, but I hope this day will never come." He tried his best to dispel the thought.

Isengard glanced at him and asked curiously, "Sherlock, what about you? If you were killed by the Desire Apostle, what wish do you have that you hope others can fulfill for you?"

…*Revive me!* Klein sighed and said, "I hope that I can be buried in a cemetery with good scenery. It's best if my corpse is intact and is sprinkled with holy water and fresh flowers…"

The core meaning of his words was: *Do not cremate me!*

The three of them fell silent for a while until they heard the tinkling sound of the doorbell.

The visitor was the deacon named Ikanser Bernard from the Machinery Hivemind. His hair was stubbornly squeezing out from the brim of his hat, giving his deep, masculine outline an indescribably messy feeling.

This time, he wasn't holding the silver mirror named Arrodes. It was unknown where he had put it.

If I have a chance, I wouldn't mind using that magic mirror to see how my loyal and humble servant would react… Klein thought.

Ikanser didn't enter. He stood there, looking at the detective trio. He then quickly said in a deep voice, "There's a clue to the Desire Apostle!"

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CHAPTER 420
DEVIL FAMILY

West Borough, 6 Edward Street.

Ikanser Bernard pressed down on his black hat, pointed at the door behind the fountain, and said to Klein, Isengard, and Kaslana, "We have reverse-investigated the various information channels for any leaks of news or information. Combined with the outline of their side profile, as well—as well as getting the help of the magic mirror, we managed to have a preliminary suspect."

You obviously paused for a moment when you mentioned the magic mirror. I wonder what price you paid to get the answer you wanted… Klein sensed the problem in Ikanser's tone and felt a baffling hint of sympathy for him.

"It's the owner of this house?" Kaslana returned with a question, sounding almost certain.

Isengard Stanton looked around and said, as if pondering, "You chose to inform us directly because you found another piece of evidence?"

"Yes, the portrait of the house's owner proves some of it. Heh, he never takes photographs," Ikanser answered frankly. "Besides, the people around here have seen a big black dog in the neighborhood many times in the past."

"This can basically prove that the suspect is that Desire Apostle." Having said this, Isengard couldn't help but laugh. "Sorry, we were too anxious and didn't give you a chance to introduce the suspect."

As he walked around the fountain and toward the front door of the house, Ikanser quickly said, "The owner of this house is Patrick Jason, the principal shareholder of a small bank. According to the description from his neighbors, he's a cheerful, enthusiastic, and optimistic middle-aged man who has remained a bachelor, but it is believed that he had several mistresses.

"At this level of wealth, the number of servants he hires is utterly inadequate. Every time a banquet or ball is held, he would need to hire a batch of temporary attendants from the City Family Servant Assistance Association. In regards to this, his explanation is due to a problem of insomnia. Too many servants will affect the silence he needs."

"I can tell that he has many secrets which need hiding, so he doesn't dare to hire too many servants," Isengard said half-jokingly.

Klein, who didn't hire a single servant, said somewhat guiltily, "Perhaps it's simply because his finances aren't as good as others think."

"Yes, that's a factor that cannot be ruled out." Isengard stepped up to the porch and came in front of the main door.

Ikanser looked at Klein and said as if in enlightenment, "You don't hire servants and only have your landlord's maid do temporary cleaning twice a week. Is it to conceal the secret that you're a Beyonder?"

Of all my secrets, that is the most trivial one… Klein deliberately smiled bitterly and said, "Yes."

As they spoke, Ikanser pushed open the front door, and an indescribable stench drifted out.

"The smell of decay…" Isengard made a judgment in an instant.

Ikanser called over a Machinery Hivemind team member.

"Carlson, any discoveries?"

The Beyonder, Carlson, wore thick glasses and had a complicated expression on his face.

"We found a lot of bodies here.

"In the cement in the basement, in the thick walls, and in the places where the garden is overgrown with weeds, one hidden corpse after another was found. The earliest could be from more than a decade ago, and the latest are the servants who were still alive a few days ago.

"Some of them are just bones, some slightly rotten. Deacon, this place is like a human slaughterhouse!"

As he spoke, the Machinery Hivemind members and the carefully selected police officers behind him carried out one corpse after another.

Some of the corpses were dismembered. Tongues, fingers, stomach bags, eyes, etc. were all lying in disarray. Some of the corpses were only bones.

"It looks like many of Backlund's disappearance cases will be solved because of this." Isengard pinched his nose and sighed.

When Klein saw an intestine which was almost dragged across the ground, he exhaled and turned to look around the house.

Machinery Hivemind member, Carlson, muttered again, "Jason paid his servants very high wages and gave them a lot of holidays. The servants living around him were all very envious… Jason's cook even promised his child that he would be home this week and take him to the circus to watch a performance…"

"A true devil…" Kaslana was slightly perturbed.

Looking around, Klein restrained his emotions and solemnly asked, "Why are the furnishings of the house so simple and crude?

"As a banker, even if the bank he owns isn't big, Jason should've had expensive porcelain, excellent paintings, luxurious wall clocks, and all sorts of items made of high-quality silk. Why can't we see any of that here? Well, the wood for his furniture is still pretty good."

Carlson glanced at Deacon Ikanser, and after receiving an assenting nod, he said, "It's clear that Jason had planned this revenge for a long time. He sold the valuable but inconspicuous items in the house, and he had even agreed to the Varvat Bank's purchase of his estate.

"After killing his servants, he sped up his liquidation and sold the oil painting and other items. He appeared to be certain that he would definitely be found, and he didn't have any thoughts of getting lucky.

"Before taking action, all he had left was his house, furniture, and identity. It's unknown where he had moved large quantities of cash, precious metals, and jewelry to."

After listening to Carlson's description, Klein suddenly thought of a few adjectives: calm, rational, crazy!

"A true devil," Isengard evaluated before sharing his deductions. "He is clear-headed and calm in his actions, but he has a strong crazy tendency and a spirit of adventure, which is characteristic of the past two deeds."

"Therefore, we have to be wary of him taking risks?" Klein grasped the gist of Detective Stanton's words.

"Yes." Isengard gravely nodded.

Next, the few detectives searched the house and found a lot of evidence to prove that Patrick Jason was problematic. They also saw the portrait hanging in the activity room.

It depicted a middle-aged man with tall cheekbones, blue eyes with a tiny of gray, ordinary facial features, and neatly-combed hair. He didn't have any special features.

At that moment, Ikanser came in and said to Klein and the others, "We found some items in a secret chamber that confirms that Jason Patrick had attempted to summon an even more powerful devil, but for some reason, he didn't succeed. And those items have confirmed his identity. He's a member of the Devil family known as Beria, so his real name should be Jason Beria."

The Beria family? Klein nodded, unsurprised.

"In the ancient Fourth Epoch, the human faction that worshiped devils formed a scattered alliance known as the Blood Sanctify Sect. This organization was internally divided quite drastically. The three great Devil families of Nois, Andariel, and Beria were a tripartite balance of forces. Their ancestors once received the bestowment of the Abyss, and they worship an evil god by the name 'Dark Side of the Universe.' They believe that 'He' is the ruler of the Abyss and that 'He' is the devastator of the world who would corrupt and degenerate the real world's entire universe," Isengard introduced to the unaffiliated Beyonders, Kaslana and Klein.

Ikanser shook his head and added, "If a deeply divided organization doesn't eventually split, integration and unification are inevitable trends. Various situations and rumors indicate that the Beria and Andariel families have gradually weakened since at least a thousand years ago, to the point of becoming vassals of the Nois family in recent decades. Well, the Beria family's symbol is the abstract symbol combination of a pentagram and goat horns."

Regardless, the Beria family is still an extremely ancient family with deep roots. It's no wonder Jason was able to raise a Devil dog. Sigh, that's just one of the reasons, another reason is that he owns a bank, even if it wasn't big… In the Second Epoch, the ancient god that corresponds to the Dark

Side of the Universe is Devil Monarch, Farbauti. Is there any connection between the two? Klein sighed while feeling curious.

After much searching, the three detectives and the Machinery Hivemind members could only confirm that Jason Patrick was the Desire Apostle, but they were unable to find the man's current location.

On the pretext of getting help from others, Klein took a handkerchief that Jason had used during the Devil summoning ritual, with plans on finding a chance to divine above the gray fog. After all, Jason had dealt with the items he often came into contact with.

Shortly after, Ikanser came to them and said with a heavy expression, "The Nighthawks will be bringing that Sealed Artifact here. We will be making a move first."

"Alright," Isengard and Kaslana answered at the same time.

As for Klein, he had long since raised his hands and feet in approval inwardly.

After exiting Jason's villa, which occupied a large area, Klein looked back and his expression gradually turned grim.

He said doubtfully, "I think there's a problem."

"What problem?" Kaslana hurriedly asked.

Klein deliberated and said, "He sold the bank, his business, and many valuable items ahead of time. That means that Jason is prepared to give up his current identity and life. If his motive is solely to seek revenge on the Devil dog, it's not sufficient to initiate such a series of actions."

"Maybe he had a very deep relationship with the Devil dog? Sherlock, you might not think so, but I've seen people who treat pets as family," Kaslana said in disagreement.

Isengard, who was standing beside them, solemnly said, "No, Sherlock is quite right.

"Kaslana, do you know what the ancient name of the Devil pathway's Sequence 8 is?"

Kaslana revealed a look of contemplation. She had apparently heard of it, but she couldn't immediately recall it.

At that moment, Klein answered for her in a low voice, "Coldblooded."

Coldblooded… As she mulled over the name, she suddenly understood why the two great detectives, Moriarty and Stanton, would say so.

Seeing her reaction, Klein pointed in another direction.

"Let's split up and begin with our own information channels."

After receiving an affirmative response from Isengard and Kaslana, he left in a hurry. However, he didn't rush south of the bridge to find Emlyn White.

He wanted to head to the Chissak Police Station and retrieve the fifty pounds he posted as bail.

He has already been proven to be without problems. Both Isengard Stanton and the official Beyonders had given their respective testimonies.

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CHAPTER 421
EXPENSIVE MATERIALS

The front door to Jason Patrick's house suddenly burst open, and a group of Nighthawks in black tweed coats jogged inside.

They wore vigilant and alert expressions, as though they were facing an extremely terrifying enemy.

Tap! Tap! Tap! A person decked out in full silver armor walked in.

The armor exuded a feeling that made it seem like it was abnormally heavy. Various details about it adhered to an ancient style, and from its left shoulder, all the way diagonally to the abdomen area, it was stained with a splash of dark red blood that appeared impossible to remove. Coupled with the sputtering red spots in other places, it created a very queer and beautiful scene, as if it was a unique and magnificent decoration.

Soul Assurer Soest took out his pocket watch and gave it a look.

"Change."

The silver armor stopped, lifting its visor to reveal the wearer. It was a handsome man with black hair and green eyes.

"Leonard, hot water has been prepared in the master bedroom's bathroom on the second floor. Don't delay any longer; otherwise, you'll only be able to return to the embrace of the Goddess," Soest exhorted him.

"Yes, Captain Soest." Leonard Mitchell, with the help of the rest of the Nighthawks, removed his heavy blood-stained silver armor.

With red gloves on, he didn't say anything, nor did he hesitate as he rushed to the second floor and found the bathtub still billowing with white steam.

Leonard quickly stripped off his clothes and lied down in the hot water without even exposing his nose.

His skin quickly turned red like a cooked lobster, and strange, scar-like silver lines gradually started to appear on the surface of his skin.

Those silver lines were like pure blade beams which constantly spread outwards and fused with the hot water.

In less than ten seconds, the steam disappeared and a thin layer of transparent ice formed on the surface of the hot water!

Only when all the silver lines dispersed did Leonard sit up, panting heavily.

He cocked his head slightly as if he was listening to something. Then, he said with a lowered voice, "Old Man, do you know the origins of 1-42?"

An elderly voice rang out in his mind.

"You are getting more and more impolite.

"I don't know where that strange armor comes from."

Without waiting for Leonard to ask further, he let out a chuckle.

"But I think I recognize the owner of the blood."

"Who is it?" Leonard asked curiously.

The slightly aged voice said in a low, deep voice, "An ancient god before the Cataclysm."

…

South of the Bridge, Rose Street, Harvest Church.

As soon as Klein stepped into the quiet prayer hall, he saw Father Utravsky and Vampire Emlyn White, one in the front and one in the back, sitting on chairs of different heights. Their hands were placed in front of their mouths and noses, with their fingers clasped together and palms empty.

This was the unique prayer position of the Church of Mother Earth.

Right now, Emlyn White's expression was gentle and calm, without any trace of the arrogance and vexation which he had before.

Klein slightly moved the corner of his mouth as he silently drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

He took a seat at random, waited until the prayer was over, and then walked over to Emlyn White. He said with a smile, "You are especially pious today."

"What?" Emlyn snapped to his senses as he muttered to himself while his expression was pale. "What have I done, what have I done…”

His voice trailed off, as though recalling what he had just done.

"Maybe it's not a bad thing." Klein consoled the vampire in an utterly unconvincing manner before sitting down next to him.

"I don't want to hear others say something like that. Although I feel my resistance is weakening…” Emlyn wore a livid expression and he said with a tone filled with despondence, "But I don't want to betray the moon!"

Klein didn't continue with the topic that depressed the vampire as he casually asked, "Do you Sanguines worship the Primordial Moon, or a particular deity that represents the moon? Or perhaps, the two of them can be considered the same?"

"All of them." Emlyn slightly raised his chin, "To a pure-blooded Sanguine, we obviously believe in the deity that represents the moon. of course, it is the god who represents the moon. Her name is Lilith, and she is the ancestor of us Sanguine, an ancient deity. And when humans become Sanguine, they tend to worship the Primordial Moon. Under normal circumstances, the two can be considered equivalent, but there are times when they do not overlap and there are differences."

"A human becoming a Sanguine?" Klein wasn't surprised that Emlyn White was able to say the name of an ancient god from the Second Epoch. Instead, he was more concerned about the tidbit about humans becoming Sanguine.

Is this the Vampire Sequence that Mr. Azik had mentioned? he thought.

Emlyn said with a slightly complicated expression, "Yes, there are two types. One is transformed from a bestowment from a powerful Sanguine, and the other is transformed from consuming a corresponding potion. The latter is our most hated enemy."

"Why?" Klein vaguely guessed at the answer.

Emlyn gritted his teeth and replied, "The main ingredient of their potion is our blood essence."

*As expected… *Klein turned his head and sized up Emlyn a few times.

The gaze left Emlyn feeling a little nervous as he snorted.

"You're already a Beyonder; there's no way you can switch pathways!"

*It's only because this is my first time seeing a walking, no—a living, no—talking Beyonder ingredient… However, in a certain sense, every human Beyonder is also such an ingredient… *Klein originally only wanted to inwardly make a casual joke, but soon he felt a strong sense of sadness.

At this moment, Emlyn looked at the Bishop Utravsky, who was carefully polishing the Sacred Emblem of Life, and said in a low voice, "I found two ingredients that you wanted."

"What are they?" Klein didn't attempt to hide his joy.

Emlyn responded smoothly, "Thousand-faced Hunter's mutated pituitary gland and blood. The asking price is 2,000 pounds for the former and 300 pounds for 100 milliliters of the latter."

2,300… Klein blurted out, "Can I get a discount?"

After receiving his bail money back, he had a total of 2,185 pounds in cash.

For a member of the middle class, this was already quite an abundant amount of savings. Perhaps some people might not be able to save that much money in their entire lifetime, but Klein found that it wasn't enough…

"No, if it weren't for me, he would've wanted 2,800 pounds, and according to the agreement, you would've paid me an extra 150 pounds for a total of 2,450 pounds," Emlyn said while shaking his head.

Looking at Klein's expression, he quickly added, "In this era, dragons are rare. Other than the long-lived Sanguine, it is very difficult to find similar Beyonder ingredients elsewhere. Even if they exist, they would be more expensive than ours."

I'm still short of 265 pounds… Having saved up so much money with such great difficulty, it will be emptied out at once. Yet, I still don't have enough… I hope Mr. Hanged Man will be able to sell the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic as soon as possible… After this, there's still the characteristic of a Human-skinned Shadow and a Deep-sea Naga's hair. It wouldn't be any cheaper… There's no way to confirm Little Sun's side of things, with him needing to conduct himself properly. The amount he owes me is probably best repaid by using the means to remove a Rampager's mental corruption in a mystical item. That would be a better form of

concealment… Many thoughts instantly flashed through Klein's mind as he felt the light outside the window dim significantly.

He took a deep breath and said, "Okay.

"However, this deal will be delayed for some time. I recently provoked a fellow and am now being protected by official Beyonders. You don't wish for that seller to be locked up in the cathedral's basement, right?"

And I still have to gather the rest of the money… Klein tilted his head slightly to look at the cathedral's dome.

"Official Beyonders?" Emlyn White jumped up and looked around.

Klein glanced at him and said, "Don't worry about it. You're now a priest of the Church of Mother Earth, and you have legal status. Moreover, Bishop Utravsky will protect you."

"I'm not…" Emlyn's denial was exceptionally weak.

He sat down again and suddenly thought of something as he said, "Can the official Beyonders resolve the problem of a psychological cue?"

"Maybe." Klein almost burst out laughing. "But in that case, you will most likely become a believer of the Evernight Goddess, the God of Steam and Machinery, or the Lord of Storms. Of course, you can also choose to become a member of the military's special department. They might be able to send you overseas as a spy to seduce some noble woman.

"I only like puppets and pure, beautiful girls!" Emlyn immediately emphasized.

I can tell that you're a little interested, but only a little… Klein switched gears and asked, "Do you know any members of the Beria family?"

"Beria? That crazy family that worships devils? No, they are devils themselves!" Emlyn blurted out. "Why are you looking for them?"

Klein helplessly said, "I've offended one of them, Jason Patrick Beria, due to a serial murder case.

"Help me find out his recent whereabouts and acquaintances in your circle. If you have any accurate information, I will pay you, depending on the importance of the information."

Of course, this could also be claimed from the Nighthawks, the Machinery Hivemind, and the military… Klein thought with relief.

Emlyn nodded thoughtfully.

"You actually dared to provoke a real devil.

"When you have exact information about him, he will know that you will bring him a great deal of harm."

"It's alright, I have the protection of the authorities," Klein replied indifferently.

After a few seconds of silence, Emlyn said, "Well, I'll try. The payment for information needs to be at least twenty pounds."

After finalizing this matter, Klein didn't stay any longer, and he walked out of the cathedral.

His mind was filled with the question of how he was going to gather the money.

Miss Magician's new book is about to be published. She should receive a sizable amount of money for it. There will still be royalties later on. Perhaps I can promote the Astrologer potion formula to her; however, she hasn't even gathered all the potion ingredients of Trickmaster… Miss

Justice has joined the Psychology Alchemists, and I have no formulas to sell her. Sell her knowledge?

The Werewolf Beyonder characteristic is worth about 1,300 pounds, perhaps even lower… Must I produce a mystical item? Or should I think of a way to get Emlyn White to become a believer of The Fool, receiving tributes at the cost of offering to remove the psychological cue…

Right, Jason Beria carried a lot of cash, jewelry, and precious metals. If he can be found, perhaps I might get a share!

As his thoughts raced, Klein walked out of the cathedral and saw the dark sky and the thin fog.

He sighed and said, "I'm really short on money…”

…

Back at Minsk Street, Klein walked into the bathroom with a thick stack of newspapers in his hand, as if he was about to fight a protracted war.

He wanted to head above the gray fog and use Jason's handkerchief to divine his whereabouts!

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CHAPTER 422
THE TRUE JASON

Inside the bathroom in 15 Minsk Street.

Klein took out a paper figurine from a concealed pocket, shook it, and transformed it into a body double.

He made the body double sit on the toilet with a newspaper in hand as a way to deceive others. Then, he hid himself in the shadows, took four steps counterclockwise, and went above the gray fog.

These series of actions were even more magical than magic!

Inside the majestic ancient palace, Klein sat at the very end of the long bronze table, conjuring Jason Beria's handkerchief in front of him.

It was only a projection, but it could also be used for divination as long as the handkerchief didn't leave his body in the real world. The earliest instance was back when he used the projection of the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem in Tingen City as a divination object. At that time, he still didn't know how to summon himself, and he was unable to bring items with spirituality above the gray fog.

Of course, there was still a big difference between using a projection and using the actual object for divination; therefore, Klein often tried his best to use the actual object. But right now, with him being protected by official Beyonders, it wasn't that convenient to carry out a ritual.

If anyone were to find him lighting candles in the day while on the toilet, he would be in deep trouble.

If I can really manage to obtain Jason Beria's location via divination, I can always take the risk by summoning myself and bringing the handkerchief up here if the revelation isn't clear enough… With a mumble, Klein produced a goatskin and a fountain pen. He wrote the divination sentence: "Jason Beria's current location."

Normally speaking, relying on a handkerchief that the target used only during a certain ritual made it impossible to divine the whereabouts of the target since the connection wasn't strong enough, and there was too much interference. For example, it was very easy to end up provoking the Abyss Grand Duke which the ritual was directed at.

But for Klein, interferences could be eliminated. The so-called Abyss Grand Duke was at most a High-Sequence Devil, and not the incarnation of the Dark Side of the Universe. Above the fog, the mysterious space had already handled deities like the Eternal Blazing Sun and the True Creator. Even a slightly weaker one was at the level of an angel, Mr. Door, and up to this point in time, he hadn't suffered any serious mishaps.

As for the problem of the connection not being strong enough, Klein, who could only be enhanced to a certain degree by the gray fog, was helpless as well. He could only give it a try and try his luck. Perhaps it would only be after he became a High-Sequence Beyonder Saint in this domain that he could have the corresponding confidence.

*In theory, it's possible. After all, when holding a ritual, one's body, heart, and mind were unified the most. It was also the easiest to communicate with the outside world… *Klein, who was now barely considered an expert in mysticism, muttered. He held the handkerchief and the goatskin with the divination statement written on it, and he leaned back into his chair.

He quickly entered a state of Cogitation and constantly chanted, "Jason Beria's current location."

After chanting it seven times, Klein fell into a deep sleep and entered the dream world.

Within the gray world, countless images flashed and intersected with each other in a rather dispersed manner.

Soon, the scene became clear and filled Klein's "vision," which made him feel as if he had entered a dream.

In the dream, the lights were dim and the desk was dark red. A figure was standing in front of the oriel window, looking out at the garden.

There was a glass shed in the garden, with roses blooming inside, bright red in the December cold.

The figure of a man was projected on the window. He was of medium height, with curly brown hair and cold brown eyes. He looked to be in his thirties.

This… Am I not divining Jason Beria's location? Who is this? He feels a little familiar… Klein was puzzled, he but didn't think further about it. He let his spirituality remain in a dispersed state, as if he were roaming some mysterious world.

Just as he raised the question, the man turned and walked to a corner of the room, where there were two large leather suitcases.

The man squatted down and opened one of the suitcases. Inside was a neat stack of bills, with gold bars placed on top of them.

The notes that were exposed were all in ten-pound denominations, while the gold bars shone with an enchanting luster.

The man pulled something out of a hidden pocket of his suitcase, shook it, and opened it.

It was a slightly pale piece of human skin!

A complete piece of human skin!

The man quickly stripped off his clothes and put on the human skin. In just ten seconds, he had become Jason Beria with tall cheekbones, blue eyes with a tint of gray, and neatly combed hair!

At this point, the scene suddenly shattered, and Klein opened his eyes.

It's no wonder that Jason was willing to take a risk. So it turns out that in the past ten years, he has always been wearing a human skin and has never shown his true face… As expected of a calm and crazy Devil… Klein couldn't help but sigh.

Jason had left his portrait in the house, and it didn't garner any suspicion from Isengard and the others, because his neighbors had seen him and knew what he looked like. Even without the portrait, with the powers of the Beyonders of the official organizations, it would've been easy to reconstruct his likeness, and the result would've been even better than a photograph; therefore, there was no reason for Jason not to have the drive to destroy something like it. This was something very logical.

Who would've thought that he would've left a hoax in somewhere that looked to be most natural! If searches are made according to the portrait, even if the Nighthawks have Sealed Artifact 1-42, it wouldn't be that easy to lock onto the target… Moreover, in both times, he had used his own abilities to conceal his face. Who would've thought that his face, which had been tightly covered and concealed, was actually fake! Klein realized how cunning Jason was.

He rubbed his temples and began to recall the scenes he saw in the dream divination.

A house with a glass greenhouse. That's a pretty obvious feature. There aren't many similar buildings in Backlund! But the question is, how do I report it? The moment I tell the Machinery Hivemind, Jason would definitely sense the danger and start to disguise himself and move away…

Directly find the Nighthawk with Sealed Artifact 1-42? What if I encounter someone familiar? I don't want to turn into ashes and be scattered into the Tussock River… Besides, I can't rush to report it. I just started gathering information, so how is it possible to receive any information from my various channels so quickly…

That fellow is really carrying a large sum of cash and jewelry, a whole suitcase worth of bills… The total value may exceed 50,000 pounds…

Thoughts raced through Klein's mind and it took him a moment to calm down. He decided to wait another two days, then use the appropriate means to inform the Nighthawks in charge of this matter with the revelation he received.

With the divination coming to an end, he returned to the real world, removed his double, and sat on the toilet himself.

…

In the afternoon, Klein threw a coin when he was about to leave.

The revelation he received was that it wasn't beneficial for him to head out.

"There will be danger if I head out?" Klein didn't hesitate to return to his living room and sit down.

After about twenty minutes, he heard the doorbell ring and saw that it was Isengard Stanton who had come to visit him.

"Mr. Stanton, any progress?" Klein asked rather delightfully.

Isengard pointed to the back of the hall.

"Let's talk inside."

"Alright." Klein made way by stepping aside.

After sitting on two sofas which faced each other, Isengard held his hunter's hat and took a deep breath.

"The Desire Apostle has appeared again."

Seeing Klein maintaining his silence, he nodded in satisfaction and continued, "The families of two detectives refused protection, believing that they wouldn't be implicated, so they remained outside. Today, at lunchtime, they were found dead in their respective offices. One was so horrified that he died from fright. The other was too excited that he expanded the last of his energy.

"They were too stubborn, as expected of believers of the Tyrant, But as a result, the Mandated Punishers have formally involved themselves. It's said that the few Churches and the military's High-Sequence Beyonders have cast their gaze over, and they've placed the matter of the Desire Apostle as one of the most important events in recent times."

"Are you hoping that I wouldn't reveal your identity as a believer of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom?" Klein asked, seemingly enlightened.

"It's easy to talk between detectives." Isengard smiled and nodded.

"No problem." Klein made the promise first, then said, "I have some information channels that are convenient to expose. If I get valuable information from them later, I hope you can help me inform the Nighthawks and keep it confidential."

As for why it's the Nighthawks instead of the Machinery Hivemind, he believed that he didn't need to be too clear about it. With the intelligence of a great detective like Stanton, he could easily figure it out.

Isengard first agreed to Klein's request, then said in puzzlement, "By telling me, it's the same as letting Jason notice it ahead of time."

"Let's hope we can think of ways of avoiding that… Also, please help me think about other possibilities. That ring of yours should be able to mimic several Beyonder powers," Klein calmly replied.

"Alright." Isengard didn't say anything further.

He pondered for a few seconds and took out his pipe to take a whiff.

"The Desire Apostle's actions today have verified one of my guesses. Heh heh, it's also the question you thought of previously."

"His main purpose isn't revenge?" Klein understood what Isengard was implying.

Isengard leaned forward and solemnly said, "Since Jason has already been through the Coldblooded stage, it means that he's definitely coldblooded. It's impossible that he would go this far for that Devil.

"Sherlock, look. Up until now, all of the official Beyonders in Backlund have been mobilized, and even the High-Sequence Beyonders have shifted their attention to this matter. At this point, if Jason wants to deal with someone else—the true target—wouldn't it be much easier?"

Klein thought over it for a moment and replied heavily, "That makes sense!"

…

After a short exchange, Isengard went on to find Kaslana. After Klein tossed the coin, he went out as planned, heading for the Quelaag Club.

Neither of them had yet revealed their suspicions to the official Beyonders, fearing that it would end up directing harm at Jason, making him detect it and abandon his series of actions.

As soon as he entered the Quelaag Club, Klein met the surgeon, Aaron in the lobby.

"Long time no see," he smiled and greeted him.

"I've been really busy recently," Aaron replied in a friendly manner, but he maintained his cold expression out of habit. "Besides, my wife recently got pregnant, and I'm going to be a father again."

"Congratulations. When did this happen?" Klein asked casually.

Aaron thought for a while and said, "It was just confirmed. She should be pregnant for more than a month."

"More than a month?" Klein was startled, and then he looked into his eyes.

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CHAPTER 423
WINDS ARISE

"Yes, a month or so ago." Aaron nudged his gold-rimmed glasses and gave him a positive answer.

A month or so ago? Isn't that when you were being troubled by Will Auceptin-related nightmares? Klein was surprised and puzzled, but he didn't let his emotions show.

In the blink of an eye, he thought of the two divinations he had made.

Will Auceptin was in a dark room with the sound of running water outside.

Was that symbolizing amniotic fluid or blood? Klein's heart chilled as he suddenly understood something.

When he looked at Dr. Aaron again, he wore a rather complicated look in his eyes.

He suspected that his wife was carrying Will Auceptin, a Snake of Mercury!

In the symbolism of mysticism, the Snake of Fate's head and tail are connected, with it devouring its own tail. It implies the cycle of destiny in a hidden manner… In order to avoid his enemy, Will Auceptin took the initiative to secretly initiate a new cycle in advance? Klein guessed based on what he knew.

Dr. Aaron didn't notice the abnormality he was trying hard to hide. He smiled and said, "He'll definitely be a cute guy. When he's born, I'll hold a

party to celebrate his arrival. Sherlock, don't refuse my invitation when the time comes."

"Perhaps it's a she," Klein replied with a smile.

Frankly speaking, he was curious to see what kind of state the newly born Snake of Mercury was in.

However, he was also a little afraid and worried. After all, the Snake of Mercury was a Sequence 1 of the Monster pathway related to fate, and it also involved the fight for the position of being a deity. No one could be sure whether the future would be smooth sailing, with peace and bliss.

For Dr. Aaron, I don't know if it was fortune or misfortune… Whether Will Auceptin is kind is one matter, but whether or not the other Snake of Mercury would discover him is another matter… And Will Auceptin hasn't done anything as of now. Informing the Nighthawks now would seem a little cruel. I've always understood wild Beyonders… It's best to just quietly watch from the sidelines and not get involved, or perhaps taking advantage of the situation is the best choice… Maybe I made a mistake in my interpretation and am overthinking things? Perhaps Will Auceptin isn't a Snake of Mercury at all! Perhaps the child Mrs. Aaron is carrying is very normal! Many thoughts flashed through Klein's mind.

"She? That's even better." Aaron said in anticipation.

After some thought, Klein asked another question, "Have you had any nightmares lately?"

"Occasionally, but they were all normal nightmares. There are no longer any nightmares of Will Auceptin anymore. Sherlock, thank you for your guidance," Aaron said earnestly.

No, no, no, that makes it abnormal. As a keyboard warrior, my limited general knowledge of psychology tells me that occasionally dreaming of Will Auceptin would be the natural thing to do. It's a standard response

from overstimulation. Since Will had caused you so much trouble and left such a deep impression on you, it would definitely be reflected in your dreams. Therefore, the correct outcome would be to occasionally dream about Will Auceptin, but the dream wouldn't be too clear, to the point of only knowing that something like that had happened without remembering the details… Klein was pretty sure.

At that moment, he heard a rustling sound.

He subconsciously looked outside the hall, only to see the darkness in the air being dispersed by a strong wind, and the thin light-yellow fog was swept away as a result.

The leafless branches swayed back and forth, and the strong gust of wind left a clear trail towards the southeast.

A few seconds later, everything returned to normal.

"It's hard to see such strong winds in Backlund during winter. At least, I don't remember anything like it before." Aaron sighed as he looked out the window.

That's not an ordinary wind… What happened? Klein suppressed his curiosity and made an excuse to go to the bathroom to perform a simple divination, but he failed to obtain any effective revelations.

He temporarily put this matter to the back of his mind and prepared to head to the underground shooting range to practice his shooting.

At that moment, a waiter wearing a red vest came through the warm hall and respectfully said, "Mr. Moriarty, your friend is here for you."

"Who?" Klein asked in surprise.

"Mr. Ikanser Bernard," the red-vested attendant answered.

The deacon who's often forced to "perm his hair"…Why is he suddenly looking for me? Have there been any new discoveries? Klein immediately walked to the reception hall of the club.

Ikanser pressed down the hat which had been pushed up by his fluffy hair, walked over, and said with a lowered voice, "The Mandated Punishers have found Jason Patrick Beria."

"How was he found?" Klein asked, half surprised, half curious.

According to his divination, Jason Beria had always been wearing human skin. His true appearance and aura weren't what they had assumed they were. It was almost impossible for him to be found so easily!

Ikanser surveyed the area and said, "I'm not sure. I just received the news."

He pointed to a small white bird standing on the tree outside the door.

The bird was leisurely cleaning its feathers with its beak.

Before Klein could ask further, Ikanser gave a general account of what had happened.

"The Mandated Punishers found clues and confirmed Jason's location. However, the Devil discovered the danger in advance and managed to kill two Mandated Punishers and fled before they managed to close in on him. This infuriated the higher-ups of the Church of the Lord of Storms. As such, Spellsinger of God, Ace Snake, is currently personally in pursuit. You likely saw a gust of wind just now. It was caused by him. He's the Archbishop of the Church of the Lord of Storms's Backlund diocese, and he's also one of the Cardinals of the Church of the Lord of Storms.

It sounds normal, but it also feels weird… According to my theory with Mr. Isengard, this can be also understood as a way for Jason, the Desire Apostle, to draw away High-Sequence Beyonders… Klein asked after some deliberation, "Are you sure that the person discovered is Jason Beria?"

Ikanser's expression instantly turned heavy as he replied with an odd tone, "I'll give it a try," he replied in a strange tone.

He motioned to Klein to follow him out and into a large carriage parked at the side of the street. There were two members of the Machinery Hivemind inside.

Ikanser took a deep breath and took out the strange-patterned silver mirror from a special pocket in his clothes.

After doing the necessary steps, he gloomily said, "Honorable Arrodes, my question is: 'Where is Jason Patrick Beria's current location.'"

The surrounding light suddenly warped, as if they were lights after a rain. A scene rapidly surfaced on the silver mirror.

It was a riverboat with a sail raised. Jason Beria, with his high cheekbones, blue eyes with a gray tint, and neatly combed hair, pressed down his cap, propped up the collar of his coat, and hurried into the cabin.

"He's really trying to escape Backlund! Spellsinger of God seems to be heading towards the dock area…" a female Machinery Hivemind member said in realization.

That's way too easy for him to be exposed, right? Klein was filled with doubt.

Ikanser wasn't concerned with any of this; all his attention was placed on the silver mirror's surface.

This time, there was only the choice of answering. Answering it wrongly or lying meant suffering a terrifying penalty.

Soon, words in blood-red appeared on the mirror:

"If the man you like is covered with lumps; has his skin shed, reducing him only to flesh and blood; or has become a monster, but it is still able to communicate with him, will you still like him?"

What a shameful question… Wait, a man? Klein almost turned his head to look at Ikanser.

Ikanser slowly breathed out and said, "I will, but I will kill him with my own hands."

"Very honest." A new combination of words appeared on the surface of the silver mirror.

…This question and answer game is simply a public hearing… Klein really wanted to cover his face.

He looked at the other two Machinery Hivemind members and saw no abnormalities from them, or perhaps, it should be said that they were pretending to not have any abnormal expressions. He hesitantly said, "I keep feeling that all of this has been too easy. Perhaps that's not the real Jason Beria?"

"But Jason Beria was directed at him." Ikanser was planning to put away the silver mirror.

Klein thought for a few seconds and said after organizing his words, "No, what I truly mean is that we have to abandon any ingrained judgments. What we are looking for is that Desire Apostle, not Jason Beria. The two might not necessarily be the same.

"This is a point that I have to mention as a detective."

…

On King's Avenue, a luxurious carriage left the kingdom's parliament.

The carpeted carriage was furnished with a bed, a sofa, a table, and other furniture, like a mobile room.

Duke Pallas Negan, who was dressed in a dark blue admiral's uniform, was drinking a polished crystal glass of red wine that resembled crimson blood.

As he sampled the wine, he said thoughtfully, "Invite Earl Hall to be my guest tomorrow. I would like to discuss with him about increasing the remuneration of the factory workers and improving their working hours, as well as amending the Poor Law. These are bills he has been pushing hard for recently. He should be very interested. Heh, why would the Church of the Evernight Goddess suddenly be concerned over such matters?

"When sending the invitation, you can first inform Earl Hall about the topics I wish to discuss. The property restrictions for the elections are necessary and cannot be lowered. Otherwise, those who are in control of a large number of workers will take up more seats. Also, suppress the recent attack on the invalid voting districts…"

The secretary at the side quickly scribbled down Duke Negan's orders.

After he was done, Duke Negan sighed and said, "The reason I'm doing this is also for the sake of the nobles. However, there are more and more useless fellows among us, and there's even quite a number of them who owe money to the tycoons."

At that moment, the carriage didn't turn towards Empress Borough but went straight ahead.

As the greatest property-owning noble apart from the king, Duke Negan had many mistresses, but in the relatively conservative Loen Kingdom, this was something which would leave him vulnerable to his political enemies. Therefore, even as a noble duke, he still had to sneak around when he went to his mistress's place, but this seemed to only give him more pleasure.

Today, he was planning to go to his most beloved mistress of the past two to three years, a young girl who had just turned twenty.

Duke Negan took out a bottle of medicine made of mummy powder and drank it. He couldn't help but touch the accessory hanging from his neck. It was a dark blue thumb-sized conch.

It was a mystical item that the Church of the Lord of Storms had specially provided after his last assassination attempt by Qilangos. As long as Duke Negan blew on it, the Holy Wind Cathedral's Spellsinger of God, Ace Snake would hear it and lock onto his position.

In order to protect himself, Duke Negan even moved the residences of his mistresses to areas near the Holy Wind Cathedral.

The carriage slowly moved until it reached an extremely luxurious building. At a glance, there was a glass greenhouse filled with bright red roses.

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CHAPTER 424
THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE

Inside the carriage outside the Quelaag Club.

"The Desire Apostle might not necessarily be Jason Beria? You believe that we might've been misled?" Ikanser didn't scoff, show contempt, or think lightly of what Klein had said. Instead, he began to seriously discuss the problem with him.

Not a bad deacon… However, it could also be due to him frequently using the magic mirror name Arrodes. No matter how bad his temper is, it would eventually be worn out… Klein praised silently and nodded sincerely.

"This is my personal opinion, derived from a cautious standpoint.

"It's very easy to prove it again. Ask the magic mirror of the Desire Apostle's location, and not of Jason Beria's location."

Ikanser pressed down his hat and said, "Makes sense."

His expression turned serious once again, and his gaze landed on the magic mirror in his palm.

"Deacon Ikanser, if you were to ask for any clues here, the Devil will definitely be able to detect it," Klein reminded them.

"That's right." Ikanser turned his head to the other two members and said, "Continue protecting Mr. Moriarty in secret. Even if the Desire Apostle attacks, the three of you should be able to last for some time. Besides, there's military personnel nearby."

"Yes, Deacon!" the two Machinery Hivemind members answered without hesitation.

Ikanser left at once, heading for where the Nighthawks were, which was around Isengard Stanton.

With the Spellsinger of God stirred, and the Sealed Artifact of the Church of Goddess Church out in force… if the Desire Apostle were to really do anything, it would definitely be this afternoon… Let's hope that there's enough time and that the magic mirror will give him the correct answer… But this way, I won't have a chance to get involved, and I won't be able to personally see the Devil that has harmed all of us die, and I won't have access to his suitcase full of money, gold bars, gold coins, and jewelry… Klein looked at the Ikanser's departing back and sighed in disappointment.

However, his mood soon recovered.

That's good too. At the very least I won't have to take any risks and be able to safely get out of this predicament.

Furthermore, the Machinery Hivemind definitely won't treat me unfairly. If I were to succeed, my opinions and suggestions definitely would've played an important role. Furthermore, I'm a believer of the God of Steam and Machinery, so it's likely I'll receive some of the spoils… Considering the premise of 50,000 pounds, it shouldn't be too small…

Klein couldn't help but feel a bit regretful as he thought of this.

But he wouldn't risk himself by getting involved.

A Magician never performs unprepared!

It happened too quickly and hastily, without giving me any time to plan at all… Klein nodded at the two Machinery Hivemind members, got out of the carriage, and returned to the Quelaag Club, where he had no trouble getting the attendant to allocate him a break room.

…

Hillston Borough. In Isengard Stanton's living room.

Leonard Mitchell combed some of his slightly unruly black hair. In accordance with Captain Soest's instructions and the help of the other Nighthawks, he barely managed to put on the silver armor, which was stained with large amounts of blood.

He pulled down his visor and hid his green eyes in the darkness. Then he extended his left hand, which was covered by a silver metal gauntlet, and held the magic mirror Ikanser handed him.

Within the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, the code name of the silver mirror was 2-111.

"It's only a Grade 2 Sealed Artifact?" Soest asked, slightly surprised.

Ikanser nodded.

"Yes, it's not that dangerous."

As he said that, he suddenly sounded like he was gritting his teeth.

"That is to say that it's other aspects have reached the standards of a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact?" Soest asked in thought.

Ikanser warily glanced at him.

"Only in certain aspects."

He refused to divulge any more information.

At this moment, Leonard used his right hand to gently stroke the surface of the silver mirror. The living room suddenly became quiet.

After repeating it three times, he said in a deep voice, "Honorable Arrodes, my question is: 'Where is the current location of the Desire Apostle who assaulted Isengard Stanton?'"

The entire house turned dark as though a dark cloud had passed by.

The surface of the silver mirror glowed with an aqueous light, and a blurry image quickly formed—it was a luxurious villa with a large garden in front of the window.

In the center of the garden, there was a glass greenhouse, with bright red roses blooming inside.

Above the glass greenhouse, the pale sun could still be seen behind the thin fog.

"It's in Backlund!" Isengard Stanton immediately derived the location of the scene based on the angle of the view and the position of the sun in the sky.

"This is completely different from the answer when we asked about Jason Beria! We've been tricked!" Ikanser said in a deep voice.

Soul Assurer Soest exhaled and said, "How crafty.

"Then, who's the Jason Beria that Spellsinger of God is chasing?

"Sigh, there's no time for discussion. We need to narrow down the general location of the presented scene. Then, we'll immediately take action. I suspect that the Desire Apostle is planning to cause a huge incident!"

At this point, the silver mirror known as Arrodes had dissipated the scene, replacing it with words.

It required Leonard Mitchell to answer a question, and if he lied or refused to answer, he would be severely punished.

For some baffling reason, Leonard felt a little nervous. He put away his usual frivolous attitude and quietly waited for the question.

A few seconds later, he saw the blood-red words change, taking shape one by one.

"On your body, is there something attached…”

Halfway through the question, Leonard's pupils rapidly contracted. His back tensed up, and a cold sweat broke out on his forehead.

If it wasn't for him being concealed by the blood-stained silver armor, the others would've already noticed his abnormality.

Right at this moment, his left palm inexplicably trembled.

The silver magic mirror suddenly trembled, and the scarlet words were strangely tainted with a tint of green. If one didn't keep staring at the mirror with rapt attention, it would be difficult for others to discover that the color of the mirror had slightly changed.

The words continued warping, changing the question to: "On your body, is there a scar which you cannot tell others?"

"Yes, that scar resides in my memory," Leonard answered stably, but his body inside the blood-stained silver armor felt a sense of exhaustion from suddenly relaxing a high tension.

This mirror is too dangerous… It actually noticed it! Thankfully, Old Man has recovered a bit after such a long time… he thought; his lips were dry.

Soest took out his pocket watch, pressed it open to take a look, and said to Leonard, who was inside the blood-stained silver armor.

"There's still time, you'll be in charge of the rest of the operation!"

"Yes, Captain Soest." Leonard let out a secret sigh.

…

Dock area, Backlund Shipyard.

Patrick Jason Beria entered a cabin he had reserved in advance.

He looked out of the window and observed the sky filled with fog as he silently counted the time.

After a while, he quickly took off his hat and clothes. Then, with a tug of his hand, he pulled off the outer layer of human skin!

Under the human skin was a beautiful woman in her early thirties with a profound look in her eyes. She wasn't the man with brown hair and brown eyes whom Klein had seen during the dream divination!

The woman took out some clothes and put them on methodically, quickly becoming an absolutely charming woman.

Finally, she pulled out a fist-sized stone figurine from the bottom of a suitcase and wrapped it tightly with the peeled off skin before tying a dead knot.

Having done all this, the riverboat was already some distance away. She opened the window and threw Patrick Jason's skin along with the stone figurine into the river.

Plop!

The human skin that was tied to the heavy object quickly sank.

The woman clapped her hands and closed the window. Carrying the suitcase, she changed to a different cabin she had prepared.

Then, she sat down at the window of the new cabin, propped up her elbows, her face in her hands, and looked out leisurely.

After an unknown period of time, she saw a strong gust of wind blowing in the air, dispersing the thin fog.

The corners of her lips curled up into a brilliant smile.

…

In a luxurious villa not far from the Holy Wind Cathedral in Cherwood Borough.

The bloated, blue-eyed Pallas Negan bear hugged his approaching mistress, a beautiful young girl with a bit of innocence on her face.

There were two people following him. One of them was a middle-aged man wearing a black tailcoat. He had brown hair and blue eyes, but he didn't wear an expression. He was a Beyonder guard provided by the Church of the Lord of Storms, a Sequence 6 Wind-blessed.

The other person was Duke Negan's secretary.

He was a thin blond young man with delicate features, looking refined and reserved. His biggest flaw was his receding hairline which didn't match his age.

As for the other guards, or security personnel, they were spread out outside the house.

On the second floor, the Wind-blessed entered the bedroom before Duke Negan for a quick inspection. Meanwhile, Duke Negan's secretary was in charge of searching the surrounding rooms.

After confirming that there were no problems, they nodded at Duke Negan, indicating that he could continue.

"My roused up feelings have almost calmed down," Duke Negan said half-jokingly.

His mistress happily responded, "Then we can have a nice chat. I'd like to hear about your time at sea."

"I hope you'll eventually have the energy to do so." Duke Negan carried his mistress into the bedroom and closed the door behind him with his heel.

His secretary and the Wind-blessed entered the rooms on either side of him, not relaxing in the slightest.

In the attic of this house.

A man in a dark overcoat sat on an old chair, his eyes half closed. It was unknown what he was trying to sense, but he would occasionally smile and shake his head.

His brown hair was slightly curled, and his brown eyes were cold. It was the same person that Klein had seen in the dream divination! The difference was that there was one fewer suitcase by his feet.

"How vigorous, and what intense desire… This doesn't match my judgment of him. It looks like he took some medicine… That just works so well for me… Heh heh, how could they possibly imagine that Patrick Jason Beria is actually two people…" The man tilted his face up slightly as if he was intoxicated.

"It's almost time… Right now!"

His right hand suddenly clenched, as if he was tightly clutching someone's heart!

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CHAPTER 425
UNDER THE ROSES

Beyond the window, the glass greenhouse reflected the pale light of the sun, and the bright roses stood out even in the thin fog.

In the bedroom, Duke Negan seemed to have recovered the feeling of following his father and elders around the vast lands when he was young, riding a horse, using a hound, and chasing a wild beast.

Finally, he climaxed and the surroundings seemed to become abnormally quiet.

At this moment, his mind suddenly buzzed once. He felt as if the pleasure and comfort he was feeling had suddenly exploded one after another. It continued exploding without end or limit, again and again.

Duke Negan's waist kept shaking, and his eyes were blank, his brain having lost its train of thought.

His heart began to beat violently in an unbearable manner, like a steam boiler whose pressure had gone beyond its limits. It could blow up at any time, and hot steam could gush out at any moment.

If it were an ordinary person or a Beyonder who wasn't physically strong, they would've suffered a heart attack, a massive cerebral hemorrhage, and die on the spot. But Duke Negan ultimately managed to ride through the attack. Only his eyes were unfocused, and saliva was flowing out the corner of his mouth before he weakly slumped onto his mistress.

The Wind-blessed and the duke's secretary, who were onguard on both sides of the room, simultaneously sensed the strange and mysterious smell of spirituality. The former's body was suddenly surrounded by a violent wind, sweeping him towards the wall, and with a clang, a large hole was blown through the wall as he stepped into the bedroom.

The secretary went straight to the source of the mystery—the attic of the house!

Along the way, he didn't evade or dodge, but the decorative vases and other objects in the corridor seemed to have found lives of their own and avoided him in ingenious ways.

As he ran up the stairs to the attic, the wooden floorboards seemed to rise, as if to give him a hand.

In just three or four seconds, the refined, handsome, blond young man entered the attic and saw a figure sitting on an old chair.

The figure was covered in a thick black liquid, just like the gathering of all the ugly desires and intense feelings in the depths of a human's heart. It was the greed of willing to sell and hang oneself by the ropes, the hunger that wouldn't even spare one's own kind, and a lust without limits.

This was a devil walking the earth!

The skinny secretary's expression didn't change, nor did he attack directly. Instead, he looked at the other party, reached behind him, and politely closed the door.

Bam!

The wooden door of the attic was closed.

The entire room suddenly felt like it had been completely sealed, as if one could never leave the room unless effort was put in to crack the seal.

At this moment, the concept of "closing the door and sealing the room" seemed to have been changed to "seal this place, isolate the outside from the inside!"

The Desire Apostle moved. His body expanded and grew a pair of huge bat wings that emitted light blue tongues of flames.

One by one, fireballs that exuded a strong sulfurous smell were formed, and they bombarded Duke Negan's blond secretary.

The secretary reached out with his white-gloved left hand and clenched it while half-turning his wrist.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The fireballs stopped following the principle of straight or parabolic paths as they scattered in every direction in a sudden outburst of chaos, like the irregular movement of tiny particles suggested by a botanist 1. Some of them hit the wall, some hit the ceiling, some fell beside the weak-looking secretary, and some fell backward, almost wounding the Desire Apostle himself.

The entire attic was a mess, with traces of destruction and char everywhere, and the house even shook a few times.

However, the mysterious power that was "sealed" in here, or the rules that had been tampered with, had yet been destroyed. The surrounding walls, the old wooden door, and the dusty roof appeared to be on the verge of collapsing, but it remained intact.

The Desire Apostle wasn't frustrated by the failure of his previous attempt, nor was he flustered that he couldn't control his enemy or catalyze him into a frenzy, due to his calmness and restrained desires. His coffee-brown eyes suddenly lit up like lava as he took the form of the blond secretary. He spat out a word in the Devil language, one filled with foulness and filth: "Die!"

Almost at the same time, the pupils under the secretary's golden-rimmed glasses constricted. He opened his left fist and aimed at the Desire Apostle with the palm of his hand.

Suddenly, his figure split into two. One was refined and skinny like his actual self. The other was a shadow covered by a black liquid of "desire." The two quickly alternated, overlapping with each other at times.

"Die!"

The words said in the Language of Foulness echoed in the attic as the secretary let out a low grunt and took two steps back.

Following that, the split silhouette dissipated, and large swaths of rusted red marks appeared on his face, as though he had turned into a man of iron that had been left in a humid area for years.

Cough! Cough! Cough! He coughed violently, spitting out blobs of rusted blood that had congealed into clumps.

The marks on his body began to slowly peel off.

Cough! Cough! Cough!

The Desire Apostle was also coughing, coughing out blood that had clumped and turned to rust. The viscous black liquid covering his entire body suddenly became much thinner.

The Language of Foulness seemed to have half of its effects transferred to him by Duke Negan's secretary!

…

In the bedroom.

The Wind-blessed helped Duke Negan up and kicked the beautiful mistress to the other side in case she was an accomplice of the assailant.

The reason why he didn't help the secretary was because he knew he had only one responsibility—to protect Duke Negan!

And in similar situations, one had to be wary of more than one enemy!

At this point, Duke Negan had somewhat recovered a little, he was rather strong, but his limbs still felt weak. His body felt empty and his mind was sluggish. He was completely unable to use his Beyonder powers.

He motioned to the Wind-blessed to remove the conch necklace from his neck and brought the item to his lips.

Duke Negan took a deep breath and blew into the small conch which was covered in strange patterns.

Splash!

The low and deep sound of the tide was heard as it rushed towards the Holy Wind Cathedral.

"With His Grace's speed, he should be able to arrive very soon!" The Wind-blessed first reassured him, and then with Duke Negan on his back, he went to the window and leaped down.

He wanted to meet up with the duke's guards outside; there were two or three Low-Sequence Beyonders among them.

Duke Negan gasped for breath and said, "Catch him, make sure to catch him alive, or with a Spirit Body…

"I want to know who it is!"

He had suffered an assassination attempt from Pirate Admiral Qilangos the last time, and now, it was an unknown Sequence 5 expert. Duke Negan was very aware that he hadn't developed any irredeemable grudges with anyone recently, as such, he was especially angry and resentful.

He wanted to find the mastermind and use all the resources at his disposal to tear the mastermind apart!

The premise of all this was that he could find clues from the assassin.

Seven or eight seconds later, most of the duke's guards surged forward, surrounding Pallas Negan and the Wind-blessed in the middle as they gathered in front of the garden.

"Wait here and be on guard against the enemy," the Wind-blessed gave the order.

Under normal circumstances, he had to protect the duke and evacuate from the assassination grounds as quickly as possible and rush to the safety of the Holy Wind Cathedral. However, he wasn't sure if there were any other enemies, and he was afraid of being ambushed en route. He was afraid of missing the reinforcements from Spellsinger of God, Ace Snake, and ending up being placed in a more perilous situation.

One second, two seconds, three seconds… Time kept flowing by as the house shook from time to time, and the battle inside seemed to have reached its climax.

"Why is the Archbishop not here yet?" the panting Duke Negan asked in a slightly panicked voice.

With the archbishop's flying speed, he should've arrived very quickly. However, there weren't any signs of the thin fog being scattered in the direction of the Holy Wind Cathedral.

On high alert, the Wind-blessed hesitantly said, "Perhaps, perhaps the Archbishop, the Archbishop…”

He eventually failed to mention the possibility that the Archbishop wasn't in the Holy Wind Cathedral.

At that moment, the beautiful mistress of Duke Negan came to the window of the bedroom on the second floor, her eyes filled with a lost and beautiful smile.

Then, she jumped down, deliberately hitting her head on the concrete floor.

Bam!

After producing a jarring sound, there were quite a few cracks on her beautiful head, and blood began to flow out.

She rolled a few times, weakly, until she was facing up.

Her eyes had lost all focus, and her frozen expression was one of madness and fear.

Seeing this scene, many members of the duke's guards couldn't help but feel horrified.

Even Duke Negan himself felt that his emotions were on the verge of collapse when Archbishop Snake didn't arrive.

"Let's go! Let's get out of here!" he weakly called out on instinct.

Just as the Wind-blessed was rejoicing over not being soft-hearted when kicking the mistress away—otherwise, the duke would've been killed on the spot—he heard a command filled with horror. His heart suddenly skipped a beat.

Inside the attic, the Desire Apostle, who was in the middle of a fierce battle, suddenly liquefied and turned into countless black shadows, jumping up and down on the ground.

After dodging the blond secretary's attack, he rematerialized in another direction.

Then, he looked at the enemy, raised his right arm, and slightly curled the corners of his mouth.

"No!" The blond secretary's eyes reddened.

All of a sudden, the Desire Apostle clenched his fist.

Outside the luxurious house, Duke Negan's horror erupted. It shot straight to his brain and into his veins, blanketing all his nerves.

He heard the sound of something shattering and felt a warm sensation at the back of his head.

At the same time, several members of the duke's guards became flustered and panicked. They all raised their custom revolvers or rifles in their hands and started shooting randomly towards the center.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The Wind-blessed was the first to reach out and grab Duke Negan. He rolled to the ground, and a formless wind as sharp as knives appeared out of thin air, slicing through the throats of the guards.

Splat. Splat. The guards clutched at their throats, slowly falling to the ground in a pool of fresh blood. Duke Negan's body twitched a few times, but then it stopped moving.

He was robbed of his life by his own horror.

If he hadn't been a Sequence 6 Beyonder, then his horror might've even dismembered him.

Of course, if he hadn't become extremely weak, then he wouldn't have possessed such intense emotions. And even if he had these emotions, then he wouldn't have directly died as a result of this.

But there were no "ifs" in this world, Pallas Negan—the leader of the Conservative Party, the noble with the largest land apart from the king, the elder brother of the current Prime Minister, a Sequence 6 Beyonder, and a truly important figure— was dead.

The roses in the nearby glass greenhouse were still in full bloom.

In the attic, the blond secretary seemed to sense something and could no longer control his emotions.

As a result, his mind went blank, and he anxiously ran outside, automatically opening the door to the sealed room.

Two seconds later, he snapped to his senses and turned around again. However, the figure that was covered by the black liquid and the suitcase in the corner had disappeared.

…

The Desire Apostle quickly left the villa, evacuating from the scene based on a predetermined route.

It was at this moment that a thick sea of blood seemed to appear before his eyes.

Footnotes:

Ch 425 Footnote 1

Brownian motion as suggested by botanist Robert Brown.

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CHAPTER 426
1-42

The Desire Apostle, who had once worn Patrick Jason's skin, stopped in his tracks and looked around in bewilderment.

Only now did he vaguely realize that danger was approaching.

He was at the edge of a garden where the grass had withered due to winter and was revealing dark brown soil.

On the right side of the street, there weren't many pedestrians on the weekday afternoon. At this moment, there were only a few people passing by, but they didn't notice anything out of the ordinary.

Suddenly, a silver glint appeared in the eyes of the Desire Apostle, and a person decked out in full body armor emerged from the other side of the garden.

The armor was stained with congealed blood, diagonally from its left shoulder all the way down. It exuded a bewitching beauty and appeared to be extremely heavy. Every step it took slightly shook the ground.

Upon seeing this blood-stained silver armor, the Desire Apostle felt as if he couldn't breathe properly, as if he had met his most terrifying nemesis.

How are they here so quickly? They saw through my ruse so quickly? The Desire Apostle regained his calm and coldbloodedness, fully focused on sensing the emotions and desires of the Beyonder inside the blood-stained silver armor.

However, to his despair, the silver armor completely blocked his Beyonder powers.

It was as if he had touched a rock, a piece of cold armor which had no one in it!

The Desire Apostle had no choice but to raise his right hand, spreading out his giant bat wings and bringing with it some blue flames that rapidly condensed.

At that moment, a silver light flashed from his right palm, and his thumb fell to the ground. The wound was extremely clean.

Amidst swooshing sounds and a flash of silver light, the remaining nine fingers of the Desire Apostle were severed. The suitcase he was carrying also fell to the ground with a thud.

The Desire Apostle's pupils immediately contracted to a needle point, and he flapped the pair of huge bat wings on his back to escape in another direction.

The shadow under his feet shrank back without anyone realizing it, hiding in one spot.

The Desire Apostle had only taken two steps when countless silver lights burst out from his body like blooming fireworks.

The thick black liquid that covered his body splashed to the ground like raindrops. His forearm, arm, shoulders, ribs, neck, and other parts of his body broke off and smoothly slid downwards.

Splat. Splat. Splat. The pale, blood-stained intestines of the Desire Apostle splashed to the ground, along with his squirming stomach and his beating heart which had yet to cease.

The place where he stood was where the blood was the thickest. The further he went, the more splatted it looked, which when put together, they formed a beautiful flower of death.

A Sequence 5 expert, a Desire Apostle who had just completed an impossible assassination, was dismembered without any resistance.

This was a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact.

This was the Sealed Artifact that had caused over a hundred thousand people to lose their lives—Sealed Artifact 1-42!

Dressed in that terrifying-looking armor, Leonard Mitchell struggled to take two steps forward, sized up the dismembered body on the ground, and raised his voice.

"He's not completely dead yet!"

He paused for a moment and then added, "Different Devils have different characteristics. This Desire Apostle is a shadow-shifter. He's just abandoned his own body, only leaving a shadow behind."

While Soul Assurer Soest instructed a number of Nighthawks and members of the Machinery Hivemind to "keep ordinary people at bay," he surveyed the scene and listened to Leonard.

He took out his pocket watch and opened it. He asked with a serious expression, "There's only ten minutes left, is it enough? Don't force it!"

"No problem! 1-42 has locked onto him. I can sense its excitement," Leonard said without hesitation.

Soest spread his red-gloved fingers and said to the other Nighthawks, "Bring hot water with you and follow Leonard closely. Once there are any problem, switch with him immediately and dig a 'bathtub' on the spot!

"Also, leave marks. The other team members and I will quickly catch up."

*Tap. Tap. Tap. *The blood-stained silver armor began running in pursuit. Despite looking heavy, it was incredulously fast.

Soest watched as the few Red Gloves left before turning to look at Ikanser.

"Deacon Bernard, take the rest of the Machinery Hivemind members to that house. Watch the duke's guards and anyone else that's alive at the scene."

"Watch?" Ikanser subconsciously returned with a question.

Soest nodded seriously and said, "How can the Desire Apostle be able to determine that the duke would be coming to this house today, to the point of precisely pinpointing the time, and then perfectly luring the Spellsinger of God away?"

Ikanser was instantly enlightened.

"Are you saying that a member of the Duke's guards or someone trusted by him is a partner of the Desire Apostle?"

Otherwise, there was no way that his timing could be that perfect!

The so-called "operation" wouldn't have any chance of success otherwise!

"It can only be said that this is the most probable cause. We cannot eliminate the assumption that the Desire Apostle has a powerful clairvoyant." Soest didn't continue as he led a second batch of Nighthawks and followed the marks to reinforce the teammates up ahead.

With a calm face, he led the rest of the Machinery Hivemind back to the house of the Duke's mistress.

He looked up at the pale sun behind the thin fog and knew that the situation in the whole of Backlund, and even the whole of the Loen Kingdom, or

even the world would change because of what had happened today.

…

In the darkness of the sewers, a shadow was advancing rapidly in a particular direction while clinging to the bottom of the stone wall.

He wanted to take advantage of the fact that the blood-stained armor was tall and heavy, making it inconvenient for him to move around in certain narrow areas of the sewers; thus, allowing him to shake him off his tail!

Every time the shadow moved a certain distance forward, it would stop, frozen in place.

His pitch-black surface continued to swell and solidify as if it was trying to produce new flesh and blood, but due to a lack of materials, it failed miserably.

The Desire Apostle let out a painful gasp, feeling that he could lose control at any moment in this state.

After a short breather, he continued to run for his life, unable to afford the time to decrease the threat of the problem he faced. He was also afraid that the terrifying blood-stained silver armor would silently catch up with him.

…

At the Quelaag Club, Klein entered the lounge and took the newspapers to the toilet.

He was afraid that the Desire Apostle would flee in advance, leaving potential danger for himself, Isengard Stanton, Kaslana, and the innocent private detectives. Therefore, he planned on heading above the gray fog to perform another divination to confirm the Desire Apostle's present situation and, thus, adopt a targeted strategy.

After repeating the previous process of replacing himself with a paper figurine, he sat in the seat of The Fool, conjuring Jason Beria's handkerchief and trying to divine his current location.

In the dusky dream world, Klein saw the dark sewers. He saw a living shadow and how his body seemingly appeared to fill itself with flesh and blood, only to constantly fail, as well as tiny black dust that kept being shed from his body.

The scene climbed higher and arrived aboveground, revealing a towering cathedral.

Holy Wind Cathedral… Klein opened his closed eyes and understood the situation of the Desire Apostle.

He hasn't been caught yet, but he seems to be heavily injured. His condition is in terrible shape and it's filled with abnormalities!

His suitcase is gone too… It must've been dropped when he was injured… Klein thought for a moment. Using divination, he recalled the map of Backlund and made it appear before his eyes.

Similarly, he came up with a rough layout of Backlund's sewers.

Having previously made full use of the sewer system, he had always been gathering similar information such as this. The main focus was on East Borough, the Backlund Bridge area, and the area where he was located in, Cherwood Backlund. After some hard work, he had long completed the first stage of his plan of understanding the main layout of the sewer network. To have a more in-depth understanding of it would require an extremely long period of persistence. When the time came, Klein even thought of infiltrating Backlund's municipal hall and directly sneak a peek at the design prints.

According to the two maps and the scene seen in the dream divination, Klein noticed that the Desire Apostle, Beria, hadn't fled in the direction of

the Tussock River. Instead, he had taken the opposite route to Hillston Borough, as if he wanted to pass through and enter the artificial lake in Empress Borough.

*In other words, he's getting closer and closer to me… *Klein's mind stirred as he suddenly had an idea.

*Although I'm not sure which sewer he'll pass through, I can make a judgment via divination… He's heavily injured and in a very strange state. His interference in this aspect has turned extremely weak. At close distances, it's not like I can't find him. After all, I've seen what he really looks like, and I have a grasp of his aura… When it comes to finding people, I'm a professional… I have to do something; I can't let him escape just like that! There's still time! *After confirming the degree of danger, Klein made up his mind and returned to the real world.

He took out the candle, quickly set up a ritual, summoned himself, and responded to himself.

Not long after, there was a figure in black armor, wearing a black crown, and a cloak of the same color in the bathroom. It was Klein in his Spirit Body state while carrying the Dark Emperor card.

He also "included" mystical items such as the Sun Brooch and Biological Poison Bottle, so as to ensure success.

Then, he disappeared into the air and left the Quelaag Club in another direction.

The current Klein could fly, so he was very fast, but he couldn't cause any wind, because he was a Spirit Body.

He "scraped" past a tree and took away a dead branch.

Having seen Jason Beria's actual appearance before, together with his own memory and the handkerchief as a medium, Klein, combined with the

layout map and the dowsing rod divination, quickly determined the sewer areas that Jason had passed.

After entering the pitch-black and fetid area, Klein used his maximum speed to pass through a large number of narrow areas and entered a relatively spacious area.

The dark river flowed, and a mixed smell filled the air. He would occasionally change his direction and chase after Jason Beria.

…

The Desire Apostle nearly lost control again. He stopped and pressed himself against the damp walls and cold pipes, trying hard to rein in his bloodlust and his desire to kill.

Pant. Pant. The thin shadow started to move.

At this moment, he suddenly turned his head to look at the spot he had just passed.

The pitch-black armor and the black crown first entered his "eyes," outlining an extremely imposing figure.

Behind the figure, the weightless cloak lightly swayed as he moved forward.

…

"It's nearby!"

A body of heavy silver armor stained in blood went through the entrance and climbed down to the sewers.

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CHAPTER 427
THE CHOICE OF THE TIMES

The murky river in the sewers flowed beneath the unlit surroundings. If a normal person walked in here, then he would have to carry a lantern in order to see the necessary details of the situation clearly.

However, to Klein, who was in his Spirit Body state, this wasn't an obstacle. Everything around him had long been reflected in his "eyes."

Therefore, when the Desire Apostle discovered him, he also discovered the Desire Apostle.

He didn't speak, nor did he hesitate. He opened his mouth and let out a soundless screech.

This was an attack that directly damaged the soul!

The Desire Apostle suddenly stopped moving, as if someone had delivered a heavy blow to him.

Large patches of shadow-like black substances fell off his body, as though he was shaking off the snowflakes that had been tainted with the deepest desires.

In that instant, the Desire Apostle, who was already severely injured, almost fainted.

Without the support of his physical body, he was like a candlelight in the middle of a raging wind, swaying back and forth, on the verge of being extinguished at any moment.

His shadow suddenly dispersed, turning into a pitch-black liquid that flowed in all directions, making it impossible to know which shadow to pursue.

At that moment, a shadow suddenly jumped out from the darkness behind Klein, and it suddenly rushed forward!

The black liquid, that could no longer be considered sticky, was merely a tool used by the Desire Apostle to confuse and make it easier for him to launch a surprise attack!

Klein didn't seem to react at all, allowing the shadow to lunge onto him.

However, the Desire Apostle suddenly shivered, as if he had touched the coldest and chilliest object possible.

The shadow rapidly slowed down, as if it had been "frozen" stiff.

He knew that wraiths and shadows came with freezing effects, but he didn't expect that the fellow wearing the Dark Emperor's crown would have such an influence on a Spirit Body like him.

This was a case of being completely suppressed when it came to their lives' natural order!

Klein had expected such an outcome. He half turned his body, stretched out his right hand and placed it on the head of the stiff shadow.

Then, the dark golden Sun Brooch, which was concealed by the black armor, flashed with a faint light.

The Desire Apostle sensed the danger and could perceive his imminent doom. He tried to resist but was temporarily powerless.

A ray of pure and holy light appeared out of nowhere and landed on the shadow's head, enveloping his body.

The surroundings were suddenly illuminated as the black shadow struggled with all its might but didn't stop evaporating. In just a blink of an eye, it had become abnormally thin, and its spirituality was filled with the radiance of the blazing sun and cries of indignation.

Klein didn't give him a chance to catch his breath, and he summoned another pure and bright Holy Light.

The feeling of daylight lasted for two seconds before the Desire Apostle fell to the ground, losing all signs of life.

His body remained in his shadow state, thin as though it had no density.

This Sequence 5 expert who had just assassinated a duke had died just like that. He didn't even have the time to pass on his last words.

At the same time, Klein saw that the deceased's spirit was on the verge of dissipating after suffering the blows.

The Beyonder characteristic will take a while to appear… Should I mimic Miss Sharron by possessing the shadow and speeding up the process… But I don't know how… Klein began considering what to do next.

Suddenly, he felt the ground tremble slightly.

Relying on his spiritual intuition, he looked back at the place where he had passed by before.

A tall, heavy silver armor was rushing over. Diagonally down from the left shoulder, it was stained with a large amount of solidified blood.

Sealed Artifact 1-42… Klein's heart tightened. Without any hesitation, he wrapped the spirit of the Desire Apostle within him and ended the summoning.

His original plan was that as long as the official Beyonders arrived, he would "return" immediately even if he didn't manage to finish off the Desire Apostle, handing over the rest to them.

The Red Glove in the blood-stained silver armor only saw a silhouette wearing a black crown and a similarly colored cloak before it disappeared without a trace.

He narrowed his eyes, carefully examining the spot where the man had just been, and found the Desire Apostle who had lost his life.

"Clearing clues and destroying evidence?" he said in a low voice.

Tap. Tap. Tap. The Red Gloves who were behind him arrived one after the other.

…

After returning above the gray fog, Klein wasn't in a hurry to channel the spirit. Instead, he directly left the mysterious space and returned to his body in the real world.

He skillfully packed up the ritual items like the candles, and soon, the last traces were removed.

After doing all of this, he once again created a double. He took four steps counterclockwise and arrived at the ancient palace above the gray fog.

Here he could communicate directly with a remnant spirit, as a real Spirit Medium could do, without having to pray to anyone or use the help of a ritual. He had confirmed that when he communicated with Nimblewright Master Rosago's spirit.

Considering that the spirit of the Desire Apostle had been purified and might dissipate at any moment, Klein prepared himself to ask the relatively more important information.

As for the potion formula for the Devil pathway, he planned to consider it only at the end. In any case, even if he obtained it, he didn't plan on selling it, lest he would nurture a few cold-blooded serial murderers.

Looking at the Desire Apostle with brown hair and brown, blank eyes, Klein emanated his spirituality and asked, "What were you plotting?"

The Desire Apostle's connection had been completely severed off from the outside world by the gray fog and could only reply in a muddled voice, "Assassinate Duke Negan."

Duke Negan… Him again? Who wants him dead so much? Klein was stunned as he asked, "Did it succeed?"

"Yes," the Desire Apostle answered calmly without giving any additional descriptions.

In this state, he only replied to whatever he was asked.

Poor Duke Negan, the Lord of Storms wasn't able to protect you… Klein gestured the sign of the crimson moon on his chest.

He didn't attempt to understand the details and directly asked, "Who instigated you to do so?"

Was it the organization that had commissioned Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos? Klein recalled the assassination attempt.

The Desire Apostle calmly said, "An organization, the most secret and ancient organization, most Beyonders don't know of its existence. Its members are said to have important figures in various fields, maybe the higher-ups of the various churches and militaries of different nations."

Sounds familiar… Could it be that secret organization which Emperor Roselle joined, the ancient organization that wields the second Blasphemy Slate? Klein's mind stirred as he asked, "What kind of reward did they

promise you, that you would be willing to give up your identity of more than ten years?"

The Desire Apostle replied in a slightly changed voice, "A Card of Blasphemy, the Abyss card!"

A Card of Blasphemy? The Abyss card, one of Roselle's twenty-two Cards of Blasphemy! This most likely corresponded to the Devil pathway. It's no wonder that the Desire Apostle was willing to sacrifice everything that he had accumulated over the past ten years just for this… In it lies the hope for him to become a High-Sequence Beyonder!

The reward is much more valuable than the mission!

However, it's unlikely that Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos would be attracted by such a reward, unless… unless that organization has another Card of Blasphemy or some other item…

If it's really the mysterious organization which Roselle joined, finding a few Cards of Blasphemy is quite normal… Even if they don't, they still possess the Blasphemy Slate…

Klein was alarmed at first before asking in confusion, "Why do they want Duke Negan dead?"

The spirit of the Desire Apostle thinned significantly again, and he said in a hollow voice, "I don't know. All I did was consider taking the mission or not."

"Then, have you heard anything?" Klein pressed.

The Desire Apostle remained in the same unperturbed state.

"I have heard that their purpose is the resurrection or awakening of the Creator.

"They interfere with the progress of history, making it fit their needs, in order to achieve their goals at a certain point in time.

"If the trend of the times aren't as they expect, then they will try their best to reverse it.

"Other than that, they just quietly watch from the sidelines, apathetic. Perhaps they wouldn't act or entrust something even once every few decades or centuries…”

A secret organization in the true sense of the word… It's consistent with Roselle's description of the powerful faction that secretly manipulates the world… It also seems related to the original Creator… Seeing that the Spirit Body of the Desire Apostle was about to disappear, Klein quickly asked, "What is the name of that organization? How can they be contacted?"

The Desire Apostle looked ahead emotionlessly, his figure quickly disintegrating.

Before he disappeared completely, he answered the question, "They are called the…

"Twilight Hermit Order."

…

Inside the house with the glass greenhouse.

The thin secretary with the gold-rimmed glasses and white gloves sat with a sullen face and a look of deep grief.

"What's your name? What Sequence are you? Which Beyonder pathway are you from?" Deacon Ikanser asked solemnly.

The blond secretary replied slowly in a deep voice, "Lockhart Siakam, Sequence 5, as for which Beyonder pathway I'm from, you can apply for access to my records from MI9."

"Alright." Ikanser then asked, "Does the duke come here at a fixed time every week?"

"No, he doesn't like to work according to a schedule, especially after the assassination attempt by Qilangos. Before today, no one knew that he would be here today, and I only heard about it in the morning at parliament," Lockhart Siakam replied seriously.

Ikanser thought and asked, "If there's a spy amongst you, who do you think he is, and who do you suspect?"

Lockhart thought about it for a few seconds, then he shook his head.

Following that, Ikanser asked for details of the battle and got a rough idea of the process.

He saw that Lockhart was pale and badly hurt; hence, he politely rose to check on the rest of the duke's guards.

After watching the deacon of the Machinery Hivemind leave, Lockhart took a deep breath and trudged over to Duke Negan's corpse.

The great noble was no longer naked like before, but the remnants of terror still remained on his face.

After looking deeply at Duke Negan's corpse, Lockhart murmured sadly, "I'm sorry."

At this moment, with his back facing everyone, the corners of his mouth slightly curled up.

He calmly added inwardly, "This is the choice of the times…”

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CHAPTER 428
THE SCAPEGOAT

West Borough, 9 Hope Street, the Prime Minister's residence.

Aguesid Negan stood behind a large table and looked at Earl Hall with a serious expression.

"Lord Hall, my secretary should've briefed you on what has happened. You're the first noble that I've thought of at this moment."

The important member of the Conservative Party, who was presently Prime Minister of the Cabinet, looked like he had aged considerably. His tall, thin figure leaned forward as if unable to bear the bad news, to the point of needing to prop himself up on the table with both hands.

But his eyes were still sharp and his attitude calm.

Earl Hall, who had a beautiful mustache, sighed and said, "I'm sorry to hear this piece of news. It has shocked me greatly. I was thinking of visiting His Grace in a few days to discuss the bill that we're all very concerned about, but who would've known that he would be attacked…”

Having lost the handsome appearance of his youth due to his deep smile lines and the fattening state of his body, he first expressed his condolences, grief, and empathy, then he restrained his emotions and said, "His Grace is already dead. Compared to crying and being angry, we need to be more careful and calm. Only by doing this can we handle the aftermath and prevent this heavy steam train of the Kingdom from derailing."

"This is also the reason why I came to you immediately. The other nobles will only call upon their gods, trembling in fear, and express how unacceptable this is. They will want the murderer to be severely punished and the mastermind found. From their point of view, even the Duke who was heavily protected could be assassinated, then what about them?" Prime Minister Aguesid said in a heavy voice. "It's a perfectly natural and understandable reaction, but it's not the reaction we need."

Earl Hall nodded and asked, "Who's the murderer? What was the motive?"

"A Devil who was disguised as a banker for more than a decade, a true Devil. By the way, your Varvat Bank just acquired his business," Aguesid said, his tone unchanged.

"Patrick Jason?" Earl Hall immediately remembered the man's name.

He was the one who approved the acquisition of the bank.

Without reprimanding him, Prime Minister Aguesid thoughtfully said, "He's a Sequence 5, but he suddenly sold his business, abandoning an identity which he had used for more than a decade, and took an extreme risk in order to assassinate my brother. From this, we can make a compelling guess that he was instigated by a person or some faction. Unfortunately, he was killed while escaping. Even his Spirit Body was taken away. According to reports from the Nighthawks, it was done by the Hero Bandit Dark Emperor.

"It involves an extremely secretive organization, and we aren't able to find out anything about it in a short period of time?" Earl Hall asked.

"Yes, that so-called Hero Bandit didn't leave any traces behind. We can only start with the people who had come into contact with Jason in the past few months. This will take a lot of time, and there may not be any results." Aguesid gave an affirmative answer.

Earl Hall took two steps forward and asked, "What's His Majesty's attitude regarding this?"

"Grief, but no specific thoughts," Aguesid replied.

Earl Hall frowned and said after some thought, "In that case, the important thing isn't about who's the mastermind behind the scenes, but what goal they wish to achieve through this matter. If they want war, or to restart the conflict in the colonies, then we need to tell the masses that the one instigating Patrick Jason was the Feysac Empire, and we would fabricate a detailed process and provide seemingly convincing evidence. In the past several centuries, this northern neighbor of ours has always played a similar role, and I think everyone is already used to it. I don't think there's any doubt that it's very, very, very normal for the barbarians to do this sort of thing."

"And the masses will be afraid of them." Prime Minister Aguesid curled the corners of his lips, without intending to smile. "But we're making a series of changes that will take at least half of next year for us to stabilize before we have the ability to wage war."

Earl Hall muttered to himself, "Then let's find a target that everyone will find acceptable. Hero Bandit Dark Emperor is too mysterious and likewise for the secret organization behind him. If it's made public just like that, it would definitely incur extreme panic. People are always afraid of the unknown."

"Yes, what about the Aurora Order? They assassinated that pervert from Intis a few months ago. It wouldn't surprise anyone if they do anything else."

"Their reputation is bad enough. Their situation has already been repeated by the papers numerous times, to the point of becoming a horror element or classic antagonist in many novels. Besides, it will effectively reduce the suspicions that others have on us. There will always be people that believe the previous assassination was us commissioning the Aurora Order.

"Also, while we're fighting against the illegal terrorist organization, let's clean up Backlund. There are too many dangerous people hidden here." Aguesid answered tersely in agreement.

"The Aurora Order isn't a bad target…

"We shall first use them as a target. When the next year comes and we're ready, then we'll publish the results of the investigation, making an accusation that the one instigating the Aurora Order was the Feysac Empire. I believe that no one will care to defend a terrorist organization and the northern barbarians."

Earl Hall was taken aback for a moment before saying, "This goes one step further than I thought."

Without another word, Aguesid stood up and said, "I'm going to meet His Majesty now."

Having said that, he looked at Earl Hall.

"You have to be careful of your safety too. We still haven't figured out the motives of the people who assassinated my brother. Humph, the Church of the Lord of Storms has already agreed to replace the archbishop of Backlund diocese. Snake is always late at crucial moments! The believers of the Storm are always irritable, irascible, stubborn, conceited, and easily maneuvered by others!"

"Don't be prejudiced. For example, Leumi is very intelligent." Earl Hall let out a low laugh, and then he tapped his chest four times. "Thank you, the Goddess will protect me."

…

The Twilight Hermit Order… sounds very imposing… Returning to the real world, Klein stood up and pressed the mechanical button for the toilet.

He walked out of the bathroom amidst the sound of running water and thought about the information he had just received from spirit channeling.

He suspected that Twilight Hermit Order was the ancient organization with the second Blasphemy Slate which Emperor Roselle had joined.

To choose to have someone assassinate Duke Negan for the sake of a so-called "historical process" sounds a little absurd, but it also seems to make sense… Their goal is to revive or awaken the original Creator? This is similar to the City of Silver's belief. Little Sun and company have never believed that the Creator is dead. They can only accept that "He" has abandoned that piece of land and has been trying to get a response from "Him"…Klein paced back and forth, letting his thoughts wander.

After an unknown amount of time, he suddenly heard knocking on the door.

It wasn't an attendant or maid from the Quelaag Club, but the bespectacled Carlson, one of the Machinery Hivemind members whom Klein had seen before.

"How did you get in?" Klein asked deliberately.

When Carlson saw that he was indeed in the room, he relaxed a little. Seeing that no one was around, he smiled.

"As a Beyonder, we often have all sorts of methods."

He received news from Deacon Ikanser, learning of the Desire Apostle's death, and came to confirm my situation. As for my performance, it's rather successful. My "illusion of a living person" wasn't exposed, and I successfully pulled the wool over everyone's eyes… Klein's hearted stirred and said, "Your expression tells me that there's good news?"

"Yes, Patrick Jason Beria has been killed. You're safe and no longer need to be protected by us," Carlson said honestly.

Such feedback made Klein feel the potion inside his body to seemingly accelerate its digestion.

Surprised and delighted, he asked, "Are you sure?"

"Yes." Carlson gave an affirmative answer.

"That's great!" Klein said happily.

Carlson looked at him and complimented him wholeheartedly, "Your detective instincts and logical thinking have given us a great deal of help. The deacon wrote that after this matter is over, a reward will be given to you in secret. Probably about 1,000 pounds."

1,000 pounds… Not bad, very generous! However, even if the bills in Jason's suitcase were of five- or one-pound denominations, and even if his jewelry isn't too expensive, it should still add up to about 50,000 pounds, right… Ma'am Mary of the National Atmospheric Pollution Council is probably worth that much if one counts her shares in the Coim Company.

Yes, Jason's accomplice in luring Spellsinger of God away had probably taken some of the money. The remaining amount is probably around twenty to thirty thousand pounds, but that's still nothing 1,000 pounds can compare with. What a pity… I can't think of it that way. Maybe Jason's accomplice took all the wealth ahead of time… Klein felt a wave of disappointment and joy.

And the reward from the Machinery Hivemind was even more proof of the success of his performance during this period of time. It made him feel like he was only one step away from completely digesting the potion.

"This is something I should do. After all, the person being threatened is me." Klein smiled.

He wasn't worried about retaliation from Jason's accomplice, because revenge was only a ruse. More importantly, he would be a Sequence 6 by

then.

Carlson nudged his glasses and said thoughtfully, "Sherlock, you're also a believer of God. We hope to establish a good relationship with you. In the future, you can inform us of whatever you encounter and gather."

This is them developing me into an informant of the Machinery Hivemind… I have another channel for reimbursement… Klein drew a triangular-shaped Sacred Emblem on his chest.

"No problem."

…

No longer being protected by the Machinery Hivemind, Klein stayed at the Quelaag Club until dinner, then he slowly took a carriage back to 15 Minsk Street.

He opened the letterbox out of habit and saw a new letter with no postage stamp.

The letter was from Detective Isengard Stanton, who left it after an afternoon visit, had written: "…I heard from the Machinery Hivemind of the suggestion you offered. Your sharpness and caution is truly astounding. If you weren't already a Beyonder, then I would even believe that being a Reader is the pathway that suits you best.

"You truly are the best young man at deduction that I've ever met!"

…

Klein stood in the living room, reading Isengard's letter by the light of the gas lamp.

*This time, there was nothing new to the performance. It was done step by step and conformed to the past performances. It didn't even have much of

an effect… But there were enough people in the audience, and all of them were by my side, which allowed me to get feedback directly… *Klein held onto the letter as he reflected over the matter.

He half closed his eyes and felt something inside his body rapidly disintegrating and dissipating. Numerous illusory stars around him seemed to appear, and he could only feel a very weak attraction from the resplendent stars.

On the last month of 1349, his Magician potion was finally digested.

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CHAPTER 429
VARIOUS PARTIES

The street lamps at night illuminated the wet ground, which was sent splashing by the occasional horse carriage that passed by.

Backlund was located in the middle of the kingdom, only dozens of kilometers from the Sonia Sea, and it rained frequently all year round. The highest temperature in July was only 28 degrees Celsius, and the lowest was around 2 degrees Celsius in winter. The weather seldom had a chance of dropping to zero or lower, but this didn't stop people from feeling the cold here. Even the northerners from Feysac, who were used to living in ice and snow, sometimes couldn't bear the humidity that penetrated through their clothing and flesh.

Klein stood behind the oriel window in a room which didn't have its fireplace lit. He looked at the tranquil scene outside and felt relaxed in his body, heart, and soul.

As long as he gathered the ingredients and concocted the potion, he could immediately advance to Sequence 6, becoming a Faceless.

The Magician potion has been completely digested… The Desire Apostle was personally finished off by me and he failed to escape… The Aurora Order's search of The Fool's believers is still going in circles… Apart from Mr. Azik being pursued by an unknown faction and the problem of the potion ingredients, I'm temporarily not troubled by anything… Klein leaned his body forward and took in a breath of air. He then looked at the fog that had condensed on the windows.

The reason why he had risked his life to intercept the Desire Apostle was because he was afraid that the other party would have other plans and, thus, smoothly escape from the pursuit of the official Beyonders. At that time, he might be remembered for his crucial advice and be avenged afterwards—as a Coldblooded, a Devil was unlikely to take the risk of avenging his comrades, but that didn't mean that they wouldn't choose to vent their anger on someone who nearly caused their death.

This operation was definitely necessary. Perhaps someone from the Twilight Hermit Order is somewhere receiving him. Once the Desire Apostle escapes, and with me not having any relevant information, perhaps I'll be prepared against a Sequence 5, believing that I would be pretty safe once I advance to Faceless, but the Desire Apostle might very well use the information provided by the Abyss card and the Twilight Hermit Order's help to advance to become a High-Sequence Beyonder! Such a development is quite scary if I think about it… One is required to inflict the finishing blow of justice… Klein reflected over what had happened this afternoon and summarized his experiences and lessons.

After enjoying the night scenery for a while, he returned to the sofa and sat down to think about his future plans.

With the reward provided by the Machinery Hivemind, I'll be able to afford the mutated pituitary gland and blood of a Thousand-faced Hunter. The Deep-sea Naga's hair simply requires me to have money. Such an ingredient should be relatively easy to find on the sea. I can get Mr. Hanged Man to help. The only problem is the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic…

And even if there is a clue, I don't have enough money…

With this in mind, Klein couldn't help but give a self-deprecating chuckle.

I'm not a person who particularly loves money, it's just a very average preference. When I was in Tingen, I always encouraged Melissa to spend and urged her and Benson to hire a maid. I felt that no matter what, I should try to not treat myself too badly, and every time I did a covert

operation, I always placed safety first and made sure to be careful so that I wouldn't be affected mentally because of the allure of wealth.

However, in order to take revenge, I have to advance, and advancing requires me to buy expensive Beyonder ingredients. I can only accumulate every single penny and save whatever I can…

He suddenly hunched his shoulders and felt that the coldness of the living room made a Magician like him, who didn't have an excellent constitution, shudder.

Therefore, he decided to take a shower, crawl into bed, and read in bed.

There's only another three or four hours left before it's bedtime; there's no need to ignite the fireplace again… With a sigh, Klein got up and walked to the second floor.

…

Under the Steam Cathedral.

After Ikanser finished reading all the recorded statements, he picked up his coffee and took a sip.

After a few seconds of silence, he pulled out the ancient silver mirror called Arrodes.

Carlson took a glance at it and asked curiously, "Deacon, if I ask the honorable Arrodes about an unsolved mathematical problem or a classical paradox, will it give me the correct answer?"

"Most of the time, it will directly reject you. If it thinks that you have ill intentions, it will even give you a lightning strike or make you suffer a curse that you would never want to face," Ikanser said with a sigh. "It's a living Sealed Artifact with extremely high intelligence, not a rigid, rule-

abiding difference machine. When using it, it's best not to think about trying to find loopholes."

Carlson looked around at his teammates and kindly suggested, "Deacon, let me ask the question for you. I have nothing I need to hide."

He straightened his back and assumed an open, honest posture.

Ikanser smiled bitterly and said, "There's no need, I already know what I need to know. I'm no longer afraid of similar questions, and occasionally, the honorable Arrodes will ask very profound questions. With your body's condition, the subsequent penalty won't be easy to bear."

With that said, he clenched his fists before spreading his fingers apart and gently stroked the surface of the mirror thrice.

In that subtle atmosphere, Ikanser asked in a deep voice, "Honorable Arrodes, my question is: 'Who or what faction instigated the Desire Apostle to assassinate Duke Negan?'"

The silver mirror didn't show any changes for a while. Only after a long time did the surface produce an aqueous light, forming a scene that looked like an oil painting.

It was a plain where the sun was about to set. The vast field was covered in a faint golden afterglow.

"What does that mean?" Carlson and the other members of the Machinery Hivemind looked at each other, unable to understand. Even though one of them was a Beyonder who had advanced from Mystery Pryer and was no stranger at reading revelations.

"Twilight? The symbol of the end of life? A sect that believes in Death, or lunatics that believe in the apocalypse?" a Mystery Pryer said after some deliberation.

Carlson nodded in agreement.

"I think it's the latter."

Ikanser ignored their discussion because Arrodes's question had already appeared.

"What color of underwear do you like best?"

Ikanser's face suddenly flushed red, and he felt as if smoke was rising from the top of his head.

With great difficulty, he spat out a word: "Red."

The room suddenly became unusually quiet, and Carlson and the others pretended to look towards a corner.

Ikanser sat down wearily and scratched his fluffy hair, ready to ask the second question.

Carlson couldn't bear it as he said, "Deacon, let me try."

“…Try not to reach the punishment phase." Ikanser finally nodded in agreement.

Carlson confidently mimicked the deacon's actions, gently stroking the surface of the silver mirror three times while the other members gathered again.

"Honorable Arrodes, my question is 'Who are the accomplices of the Desire Apostle?'"

The aqueous light stirred as the scene changed. It first presented a woman's back, one with an outstanding figure.

Then, there was a person who was extremely blurry and could barely be identified as a man based on his attire.

"There is indeed another partner. This should be the person who sold the intelligence on Duke Negan! It's a pity that the other party has already dealt with it…” Carlson looked around and said.

He felt that he had no secrets and didn't need to care about the questions that followed.

This time, the choices that Arrodes offered was a question, a mission, or a penalty.

Without any hesitation, Carlson said, "Question!"

Words that looked like dripping blood quickly outlined the surface of the silver mirror: "Do you relieve yourself daily with your hand?"

Carlson's lips quivered, and he felt his ears rapidly turn hot.

Although this was something he found very normal, giving an answer in front of so many teammates and his superior still gave him the urge to bury his head in the ground.

"Yes…” he answered very quietly.

…

Under Saint Samuel Cathedral.

Daly, with her blue eye shadow, tossed a stack of documents in front of Soul Assurer Soest.

"All the information you want on the tarot card case."

"It's smaller than I thought," Soest said, slightly surprised.

Daly snickered.

"This is just an index."

Upon seeing this, Leonard touched his lower lip with the palm of his red gloved-right hand.

"Captain Soest, why don't we do a thorough investigation of the people who interacted with Jason Beria and compare it with the two previous cases? There might be clues to the organization that is symbolized by tarot cards."

"Duke Negan is a devout believer of the Lord of Storms, and he represents the interests of the Church of the Lord of Storms in the political scene. The Mandated Punishers will definitely be frantically searching for the real culprit, so we don't need to get involved; otherwise, we'll easily be put at odds with them. Let's investigate the cases involving the tarot cards, and who knows, we might find new clues. Of course, we'll definitely end up running all over the place, but that's part and parcel of a Red Glove's duties," Soest explained with a smile.

Leonard nodded.

"I understand.

And deep in his mind, the elderly voice tsked and laughed.

"The Nighthawks have missed it just like that. That person has the smell of the Dark Emperor, the true Dark Emperor!"

…

Inside the Holy Wind Cathedral.

Wearing a black bonnet, Spellsinger of God, Ace Snake, swept his silver eyes and picked a Mandated Punisher elite.

"Although I'm about to leave Backlund, this is the decision of the Council of Cardinals.

"You only have one mission after this, and that is to investigate the assassination of Duke Negan.

"After applying, all of you have the right to use a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact. You must find out who is targeting us!"

Standing at the very front, a middle-aged man wearing a modified captain's hat immediately led the group. He clenched his fist and lightly tapped his chest.

"As you command, Your Eminence!"

He was lean and had no particularly outstanding features, but there was an anchor tattoo on his neck.

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Earl Hall.

Audrey looked at Susie, who had opened the door herself, and said in a low voice, "What's Father and the others talking about?"

When she found out that Earl Hall had returned late and that his expression was unusually grave, she immediately sent Susie in to listen.

"Duke Negan was assassinated." Susie closed the door behind her with her feet.

"Ah?" Audrey froze, suspecting that she had misheard.

Although she had already experienced an assassination attempt on Duke Negan, she had never thought that this powerful noble would actually die.

"It's true." Susie gave an affirmative answer.

Audrey instantly felt a little blank, finding it a little surreal.

How could such a powerful noble, a person of flesh and blood, capable of speaking and laughing, the duke who had given her a piece of land, die just like that?

Suddenly, she felt the cruelty and coldness of the adult world.

"Who did it?" Audrey asked subconsciously.

"A Sequence 5 Devil," Sequence answered quickly. "But he has already been silenced by the so-called Hero Bandit Dark Emperor."

"Ah?" Audrey was stunned once again.

How could it be the Hero Bandit Dark Emperor? How could it be Mr. Fool's adorer?

He helped me resolve the problem of Duke Negan's previous assassination!

This is a complete contradiction!

Audrey immediately told Susie to eavesdrop again while she locked the door behind her and sat at the edge of her bed, praying to Mr. Fool.

After she had finished reciting his honorific name and had described the assassination of Duke Negan, she asked with great trust, "Was your adorer present there?"

After a while, she saw the endless gray fog and heard the voice of The Fool.

"Yes.

"He's looking for the organization that directed the Desire Apostle."

*As expected, it wasn't arranged by Mr. Fool! Was the reason why "He" had his adorer stop Qilangos last time also because of that organization that's pulling the strings behind the scenes? *Audrey relaxed and asked curiously, "What organization is that? For it to gain your attention."

A second later, she heard Mr. Fool reply in an unperturbed manner, "Twilight Hermit Order."

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CHAPTER 430
A BRAND NEW DAY

Twilight Hermit Order…

What kind of organization is it? Why haven't I heard of it? When Mr. Hanged Man was filling me in on the general knowledge of the various factions, he didn't even mention anything about this…

Audrey was both surprised and confused. As the gray fog faded away, Mr. Fool's aloof figure had vanished.

Her eyes darted around as she quickly made a guess.

This organization known as the Twilight Hermit Order sounds even more powerful and mysterious than the other underground powers such as the Aurora Order and the Life School of Thought. It's so unknown that even the knowledgeable and experienced Mr. Hanged Man, who's closely related to the Church of the Lord of Storms, doesn't know of its existence…

And their plot was directed at a powerful noble of the kingdom, one of the most powerful people in the world.

They might be the observers hidden in the deepest depths of the Beyonder world, the true controllers. They influence the situation of the Northern and Southern Continents, so it's no wonder that they would be noticed by Mr. Fool…

The last time Mr. Hanged Man successfully got "His" adorer to help wasn't because the promised reward was sufficiently high, but because Mr. Fool himself was targeting Twilight Hermit Order…

This organization is as mysterious as our Tarot Club…

Audrey, for some inexplicable reason, became a little excited, and this diluted the impact Duke Negan's assassination had on her.

There definitely aren't a lot of Beyonders who know of the existence of the Twilight Hermit Order. And I'm one of them, and we, the Tarot Club, are targeting them! Audrey stood up and walked to the full-body mirror in front of her.

She raised her chin slightly, showing an abnormally beautiful angle.

Staring at the girl in the mirror, Audrey slowly calmed down. This was the first time she felt it was imperative that she quickly raised her Sequence.

Even Duke Negan, a Beyonder under tremendous amounts of protection, can be assassinated, let alone Father who's just an ordinary person.

Although based on the family vault's situation, there are definitely many Beyonders in the family, and the Church of the Goddess will also provide additional protection. However, this doesn't ease my heart. Duke Negan's guards aren't any weaker than what we have…

All the best, Audrey, get to Sequence 7 as soon as possible, then Sequence 6, and then hide in the darkness. I'll be my father, mother, and brothers' last line of defense!

…

The capital of the Rorsted Archipelago, the City of Generosity.

The Blue Avenger was once again passing by, moored at the port, giving sailors a chance to indulge and vent.

Alger Wilson changed into a robe embroidered with storm patterns and went to the largest cathedral on the archipelago, the Cathedral of Waves.

It was classical in style, and it mostly used stone pillars and arched structures, and it had a towering dome and two clock towers—in the early days of colonization, the pioneers often had no time to build a cathedral, which brought about very serious consequences for them.

Surrounded by tribes, jungles, and ancient buildings, they would often die mysteriously in great numbers for no reason at all, even after they had conquered the region.

This situation, which had caused a great panic, gradually deteriorated after the cathedrals of the various Churches were built, becoming something that happened only once in a while.

Standing in front of the cathedral, Alger was in no hurry to enter. Instead, he looked through the narrow windows at the dark and mysterious atmosphere and the warm candlelight that illuminated the activity area.

A few seconds later, he entered the grand prayer hall, clenched his right fist and struck his left chest. He turned to the bishop facing him and said, "May the Storm be with you!"

"May the Storm be with you!" the bishop responded in the same way.

Without waiting for Alger to speak, the bishop of the Cathedral of Waves took out a telegram.

"You're just in time. The Council of Cardinals has issued orders. Read it before praying."

"What orders?" Alger asked casually as he reached out to take it.

The bishop's expression was grave as he said, "Duke Negan has been assassinated. The Council of Cardinals has ordered all Mandated Punisher and priests to pay attention to anything regarding the Hero Bandit Dark Emperor, as well as all the matters related to the tarot ritual."

Hero Bandit Dark Emperor? Alger perfectly expressed his surprise.

He already knew that the Dark Emperor was Mr. Fool's adorer.

The bishop said with a serious nod, "The assassin of Duke Negan is a Sequence 5 Devil, but while escaping, he was killed by Hero Bandit Dark Emperor. This is the same outcome as Rear Admiral Qilangos, who failed to assassinate the duke."

Not only are the superficial circumstances the same, but even the core issues are the same… It was also Mr. Fool's adorer who killed Qilangos, another adorer… Was Mr. Fool the one who really wanted Duke Negan dead? No, if it were really him, then he would've warned Qilangos the last time to be careful of Miss Justice, so as to not expose his identity on the spot… Mr. Fool is paying attention to the truth behind the assassination and the real murderer? Who could it be, or which organization would receive so much attention from Mr. Fool? Alger instantly thought of many things and made a preliminary judgment.

He looked down at the telegram and saw that the Church had set up a special investigation team for the assassination of Duke Negan. Every member was an elite of the Mandated Punishers.

Should I apply to join, so as to have a grasp of their actions at any time? Alger hesitated for a moment.

In the end, he decided to follow his original plan and keep a low profile.

…

With a brand new day, Klein slept until he woke up naturally. He slowly got up, washed his face, and went downstairs.

He wasn't in a hurry to prepare breakfast. Instead, he habitually opened the door, bathed in the fog, and took out today's newspaper from the letterbox.

"What is it?" Suddenly, he noticed that there was a thick envelope stuffed inside the newspaper. It wasn't light at all.

Squeezing the surface, Klein's mind flashed with the faint fragrance of banknote ink.

His spiritual intuition told him that there was a lot of cash inside.

Carefully, he opened it and pulled out the stack of money.

After counting the money, he confirmed that there was a total of 1000 pounds.

*It's the reward money from the Machinery Hivemind… Is this their way of secretly handing me the money? How can they be so certain this is fine? Leaving it in my mailbox just like that? What happens if it's stolen? *The delighted Klein couldn't help but grumble.

With this money, and without the Machinery Hivemind protecting him in secret, he could go to Vampire Emlyn White to complete the previous transaction!

After breakfast, Klein immediately put on his coat and hat, held his cane, and stuffed the newspaper in his arm and went out.

On his way to the carriage stop, he saw his landlord, Mrs. Stelyn Sammer directing the maid to load the suitcase into the carriage in front of the door.

"Good morning, Mrs. Sammer." Klein smiled and greeted her.

Stelyn smiled modestly and returned the greeting.

She seems to have recovered mentally… Who knows what happened to her… Klein curiously asked, "Where are you going?"

"It's almost New Year's. Mary gave Luke some time off in advance. We're going to Desi Bay to usher in the new year," Stelyn said proactively. "Sigh, we've been to a few of the cities there, including the famous coastal towns. This time, we're preparing to go to Feynapotter. I've heard that the scenery in Seville City is quite good."

Klein replied in jest, "How enviable."

"What about you? Detective Moriarty, where do you plan on spending the New Year?" Stelyn asked with a smile.

I'm probably staying here… Oh right, I have to prepare some tools to repair the wall which Stuart had previously shot a hole in… Klein smirked and said, "Back to Midseashire, where the winter smells different."

The smile on Stelyn's face became even more obvious.

"I hope to meet you at Desi Bay in future New Year's Eve celebrations."

…

South of the Bridge, Rose Street, Harvest Church.

Upon seeing Detective Sherlock Moriarty in his black tweed coat, Emlyn White, who was carefully wiping the candle stand, smiled.

He combed his hair, walked over with his head held high and said in a low voice, "There's information on Jason Beria. A Sanguine knows him."

"I have his information as well." Klein smiled as he handed the newspaper over. The headline read: "Yesterday, His Grace the Duke of Negan assassinated, a true devil plundering the land."

Beneath the title was a detailed description of the assassination yesterday, and it revealed that the murderer was a banker named Patrick Jason who

was killed on the spot, and the terrorist organization, the Aurora Order, claimed responsibility.

When he saw the news earlier, Klein, who was having his breakfast, almost spewed out the milk in his mouth.

At first, he imagined that the Aurora Order's Mr. A was brain damaged to take responsibility for this matter. However, after thinking about it carefully, he felt that it was most likely a cover used by the officials.

If the Twilight Hermit Order is really the ancient organization which Emperor Roselle joined, then they would be extremely hostile towards the Aurora Order. After all, they hate the True Creator… This thought suddenly flashed through Klein's mind.

Emlyn looked blankly at the newspaper again and again before asking in disbelief, "Does this mean the information I got is useless?"

"In theory." Klein gave the vampire gentleman a sympathetic look. "However, the official organizations are still investigating the masterminds behind Jason Beria, if your information points in the right direction, it should be of worth."

As for Klein himself, he obviously didn't want to get involved in this matter anymore.

"No… He only knew Jason Beria and some of his hobbies." Emlyn sighed.

Seeing his reaction, Klein asked in amusement, "Don't you usually read newspapers?"

*How did you only learn of such an important matter until now!? *

Emlyn gave him an odd glance.

"Why should I read the newspapers?

"I'm very busy."

Busy cleaning the Harvest Church, busy spending time with those dolls you have at home, and busy thinking of ways to trick people into giving you blood to drink… You really are a new-age vampire… Klein opened his mouth, but he used his Clown powers to suppress the laughter he was about to let out.

He didn't tease Emlyn White and said seriously, "I've already gathered enough money for those two ingredients.

"When can you give them to me?"

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CHAPTER 431
A DROWNING MAN SHOULDN’T DESPERATELY CLUTCH AT STRAWS

Upon hearing Klein's question, Emlyn White jumped in fright as he carefully sized him up and said, "You're richer than I thought."

He had imagined that Sherlock Moriarty would take at least a week to raise 2,450 pounds.

"I've been saving for a long time." Klein sighed in response.

Emlyn nodded thoughtfully.

"It's so lucrative being a private detective?"

"This is just an identity that makes things convenient. If you don't encounter a huge bounty, it'll be two to three hundred pounds a year," Klein said frankly.

Emlyn glanced at him and asked casually, "So what do you actually do? Smuggling arms? Stealing from the vaults of the rich and powerful? For Beyonders below Sequence 7, there's not much that can be done to save up more than 2,000 pounds so quickly, and most of them are gray areas that border on breaking the law. "

You, a vampire, are talking to me about breaking the law? It seems like you're rather eager to make some quick money… Klein smiled.

"Accept some relatively dangerous missions; if you aren't afraid of death, you can try."

Emlyn shut his mouth, and only after a long time did he say, "Come and find me in the evening. I'll take you to the seller's place."

What an obedient vampire… Klein was about to agree, but he suddenly found it unsafe.

What if the seller gets thoughts from seeing all the money? What if he doesn't have the corresponding Beyonder ingredients and is trying to fool me to commit a robbery? Emlyn White can be trusted, but not necessarily the seller he's introducing… I have to find an excuse to perform a divination above the gray fog to confirm the degree of danger… Yes, there's no need for it to be so complicated. There's a better way… After some thought, Klein turned his head to look at Emlyn.

"No, go by yourself.

"I'll give you 1,000 pounds as a deposit, and you'll bring the two ingredients to the Harvest Church. After confirmation, I'll pay the remaining balance. I believe the seller will accept this method. This will show the credit of a noble Sanguine."

Upon being flattered, Emlyn unconsciously lifted his chin.

"There's no problem with this way of trading."

Saying that, he let out a laugh.

"Are you afraid that the other party will not keep their word? Are you more at ease in the Harvest Church?"

"Of course, anyone would feel safe when they see a Mother Earth adorer by the side, who is over 2.2 meters tall and has exceptionally firm muscles."

Klein smiled and pointed at Father Utravsky. "People who can deal with him wouldn't mind two to three thousand pounds."

Emlyn's face darkened, and he snorted.

"Aren't you worried that I'll steal the thousand-pound deposit?"

Klein casually looked straight ahead.

"Why should I be worried?

"You will come back here every day, making it easy to find you, and a living creature like a vampire would sell for more than a thousand pounds."

Emlyn, who had been hit in a sore spot, muttered in exasperation, "Sanguine! Do you understand? Sanguine!

"Also, don't call me a creature!"

Klein chuckled and didn't say anything as he waited for Emlyn to calm down.

"We'll do it the way you requested." Finally, Emlyn reached out and rubbed his temples.

Klein immediately took out the envelope he had received that morning, and he handed it to him along with the thick stack of cash worth a thousand pounds.

"See you here at eight tonight."

After counting the bills and after confirming that there was no mistake, Emlyn warily stole a glance at Father Utravsky and said in a low voice, "Mr. Private Detective, with you being in contact with a lot of intelligence and news, have you heard of an evil god known as The Fool?"

Evil?… Evil? You f… Inwardly, Klein nearly threw out a profanity.

He answered with the most normal expression, "Many people are searching for believers of The Fool recently. Are you planning on joining their ranks to obtain the relevant bounty?"

Emlyn sighed and said, "No, I'm only considering whether I should ask this evil god or the evil soul to help me dispel the psychological cue. As you know, the rumors going around include "His" specific honorific name, and as long as it's converted into Hermes or ancient Hermes, it's possible to get a response… What do you know about "Him"? How much harm will "He" bring to "His" believers? Will "He" forcefully change the believers' views?"

Although it points to me, I still have to say. My dear vampire friend, you are like a drowning man desperately clutching at straws… Feeling mixed emotions, Klein said, "The Fool is very mysterious. Up to this day, apart from the news you already know, no one knows of 'His' detailed situation. For example, how vast his clergy is, or what sort of corresponding prayer rituals there are.

"What puzzles me is that you aren't considering the two of your vamp—Uh, Sanguine's ancestor, the ancient goddess Lilith? As long as the ritual is correct and the offerings are appropriate, 'She' will help you dispel the psychological cue."

Emlyn leaned back slightly and stared straight ahead, saying nothing for several seconds.

He seemed to instantly become sullen.

After a brief moment of silence, he said in a low voice, "Before the Cataclysm, the ancestor had already rarely responded to prayers. Only certain special circumstances allowed us to get 'Her' help. This does not include the removal of a psychological cue."

In the legends of the City of Silver, the ancient goddess, Lilith, who represented the moon had already had her authority taken back by the awakened Creator, or perhaps she had fallen in some battle among the gods earlier on… Then, who is the one occasionally responding to the Sanguines' pleas? The Primordial Moon? Klein deliberately pressed, "Then, there's still the Primordial Moon to pray to. Many underground Beyonders have rituals that borrow 'His' power."

This is mainly referring to the Shaman King and the corresponding biological creatures… Klein added inwardly.

Emlyn's lips quivered, but he didn't speak as there was an indescribable fear on his face.

After a long time, he solemnly said, "I suspect that the Primordial Moon was impersonated by some evil god or a high-level devil. People who pray to 'Him' mostly experience change, turning cruel, crazy, and even filled with desire. And the remaining ones, with the Sanguine mainly, there is a higher chance of them losing control and becoming true monsters.

"There was once a powerful Sanguine that tried to pray due to some danger, but she ended up turning into nothing but a hunk of meat that only knows to mate and reproduce. She, together with bulls, rams, stallions, mice, and even plants and rocks, gave birth to one strange descendant after another. Each one of them developed their own Monster species. Thankfully, she was quickly eliminated along with her descendants.

…The Primordial Moon is that dangerous? There was no mention of it in the Book of Secrets. Had Shaman King Klarman's thoughts been corrupted? Fortunately, I only referenced, modified, and prayed to myself… Klein's heart raced in fright as a result of Emlyn White's description.

This made him acutely realize that the hidden existences other than the seven deities were indeed not that trustworthy.

Except me… He sighed.

At that moment, Emlyn smiled bitterly and said, "If the negative effects brought by The Fool isn't that great, praying to 'Him' might be something to consider."

The only effect is that you will pay a certain amount of money for it… In order to maintain his image, Klein could only pat Emlyn on the shoulder and draw a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

"It's very dangerous to pray to a hidden existence that you don't know about. If you're considering that, you might as well choose a faith out of the seven deities you prefer. They won't affect your daily life and won't make you abandon your dolls."

"If there's really no other way…" Emlyn suddenly found himself calmer than he had expected.

Klein didn't linger on. He pushed his way out into the aisle and walked out of the Harvest Church.

Looking out at the misty sky, he began to think about what to do next.

There was no doubt that his current focus was on saving money and finding the ingredients.

Little Sun's side needs to stabilize a little more. To prevent him from being suspected again, I'll use the method of ridding a Rampager's mental corruption as the promised payment… The Deep-sea Naga's hair can be entrusted to Mr. Hanged Man. I'll have to rely on myself for the Human-skinned Shadow's characteristic… There hasn't been any relevant information from Emlyn White and Eye of Wisdom, Mr. Stanton, for over a month. I'll have to try different channels… Yes, it's been quite long. It's likely that the High-Sequence Beyonder of the Rose School of Thought isn't monitoring the Bravehearts Bar that closely. I'll go visit it in the evening and see if I can contact Miss Sharron and Maric… Klein quickly had an idea.

In order to go to Bravehearts Bar, he had to first go to East Borough and change his worker's clothes in the one-bedroom apartment he also rented on Black Palm Street.

As he thought of this, he walked towards the carriage stop on the opposite side of the road.

…

West Borough, inside Grimm Cemetery.

Fors Wall, who was dressed in a black veiled hat, quietly walked beside Dorian Gray, a member of the Abraham family. She had accompanied him to place flowers on Lawrence, Aulisa, and company's graves.

While walking silently, her thoughts were completely focused on the Beyonder ingredient, the Spirit Eater's stomach pouch.

She knew that she had already digested the Apprentice potion and as long as she could get the Spirit Eater's stomach pouch, she would become a Trickmaster. However, she ultimately lacked the clues related to it, and The Sun, that she had the most expectations at being able to help her, didn't dare to hold a ritual or invite friends to hunt Spirit Eaters because of what had happened before.

In order to advance as quickly as possible and escape the curse of the full moon, she had even asked Mr. Fool for help, hoping that "His" adorers could help her find the ingredients. In the process, she revealed that she had published her new book and was about to receive a fixed fee for the book, in order to prove that she had sufficient power to purchase it—she didn't fear that her real identity would be known by Mr. Fool, because she believed that Mr. Fool clearly knew it.

In the secluded, quiet, and cold environment, Fors and Dorian stopped at Lawrence's grave.

Looking at the photo taken after his death and reading the epitaph: "he's a good teacher," Dorian Gray remained silent for a long time before sighing.

"How ironic…”

"Why?" Fors asked in surprise.

She had heard Lawrence mention that he was a public school teacher in Constant City, Midseashire, and that was why she had used such an epitaph.

"This has nothing to do with you. It has to do with our family." Dorian gave a self-deprecating laugh and bent down to put down the flowers.

After straightening his body, he looked straight ahead, and suddenly spoke out, "Fors, do you want to become a Beyonder? The kind I described in my letter."

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CHAPTER 432
CONTRACTED CREATURES

Dorian Gray's question didn't surprise Fors at all. She had been prepared after keeping in contact with him for the past month, and she had even asked the experienced Mr. Hanged Man at the Tarot Club to decide what kind of expression and reaction she should use when faced with the question.

"Are there really such Beyonders?" Fors asked in surprise.

Dorian gently nodded.

"Yes."

He looked around to make sure that there was no one around, then he walked up to a tree with fallen leaves and pressed his hand on it.

Dorian's figure suddenly blurred, as if turning into a reflection in the water.

When it was clear, he had already appeared behind the tree, his posture unchanging.

"Oh god! That's really, really amazing!" Remembering the teachings of Mr. Hanged Man and Miss Justice, her mouth opened in a semicircle as she exclaimed.

Dorian walked back, smiled, and asked, "Do you want to become such a Beyonder?"

Fors fell silent for a moment before she answered him "excitedly", "…”Yes!"

Now that she was finally going to be a periphery member of the Abraham family, many things would be much easier for her in the future! Her heart was filled with genuine joy.

Dorian laughed before turning his expression grave, asking in all seriousness, "Are you willing to be my student?"

Fors nodded.

"Yes!"

Dorian let out a sigh of relief and then made a self-deprecating comment.

"I'm not a good teacher, I even taught a… Heh, there's no need to mention the past anymore. In short, don't hold too high of an expectation."

After considering it over this period of time, he had decided to learn from his previous experiences and lessons. He didn't tell Fors the situation regarding the Abraham family and only treated their relationship as one of teacher and student. That way, he didn't have to worry about the other party coveting his family's few remaining mystical items.

"No, your explanations of mysticism are excellent, really, Mr. Gray. No, Teacher." Fors quickly confirmed the relationship between them.

Dorian looked at the tombstone, shook his head, and exhaled.

"I wasn't planning on taking in any more students, but your noble character infected me.

"If nothing unexpected happens, I can give you the corresponding potion today."

"Today?" Fors asked, surprised.

Back when she went to Backlund Station to pick up Dorian Gray, she noticed that he was carrying only a very small suitcase, barely enough for a change of clothes. There was no evidence that he had any Beyonder ingredients on him.

Does he have his own resources and channels in Backlund, ones that belong to the Abraham family? Fors made a vague guess.

Her original plan was to rely on the inconvenience of the distance between them to sell off the Beyonder ingredients for the Apprentice potion, and then tell him that she had successfully advanced to become a Beyonder. This way, she was able to obtain a considerable amount of cash, as well as to avoid the tragic consequence of taking the Apprentice potion again and having to spend time to digest it.

"Yes." Without explaining, Dorian pointed in the other direction. "Let's go see Laubero and Aulisa first."

Taking a turn, they left Grimm Cemetery and returned to the house in Cherwood Borough which Fors and Xio had rented.

For the past month or so, Xio, who had advanced to Sheriff, had been leaving early and returning late every day in order to pay off her heavy debts. She had been trying hard to get every bounty she could get, so there was no doubt that she was of the house around noon.

"Is there a quiet room?" Dorian looked around casually.

"Plenty." Fors led her new teacher into the activity room on the first floor.

Dorian circled the room, checked the surroundings, and then asked Fors to light a candle mixed with a piece of dark red sandalwood.

He closed the door and drew the curtains.

He walked to the candle and took out two bottles of essential oil and some common herbal powders.

Holding a ritual? Shouldn't there be three candles? Fors curiously watched from the side and didn't rashly open her mouth, as if she was stunned by the atmosphere.

After finishing the first part of the ritual, Dorian took a step back and, with a serious expression, switched to the language of ancient Hermes.

"I!

"I summon in my name:

"Special Spirit Bodies roaming the upper realms, the void creature that loves music, Dorian Gray Abraham's Contract Companion."

Whoosh!

There was a sudden gust of wind in the activity room, and with a sobbing voice, the flickering candle flames were tinged with a deep blue hue.

The rings of light quickly spread out, forming a door that was beyond the concept of normality.

A ball of semi-illusory and half-corporeal objects flew out from the bottom of the circle of light.

Its entire body was colored a milky white. There were no eyes, nose, arms, or legs around it. Only an opening which resembled a mouth cracked open over its surface.

Dorian grinned, opened his mouth, and began to hum a gentle folk lullaby.

The "ball" swayed left and right, appearing extremely satisfied.

After he finished humming, Dorian extended his hand.

"Malmouth, give me the items that I deposited with you the day before yesterday."

The "ball" jumped up and down as its body suddenly swelled while it opened its "mouth" extremely wide.

Then, it spat out two Beyonder ingredients which had strange lusters to them.

*To think that can be done… *Fors stared in surprise.

Dorian caught the Apprentice potion's main ingredients, canceled the summoning, and ended the ritual.

He turned his head and smiled at Fors.

"Even in the spirit world, void creatures like Malmouth are extremely rare. Under normal circumstances, summoning rituals will not point to them. An elder of a sufficiently high Sequence must enter the Spirit World and, after a long period of searching, make a contract with one of them. That way, it will allow subsequent descendants to complete a summoning ritual with their corresponding name.

"After the void creature arrives, a new contract can be made, making them closely connected to oneself and no longer summonable by others."

"So that's how it is… That sounds interesting!" Fors said from the bottom of her heart.

She couldn't help but look forward to the future.

If I don't consider the curse of the full moon, or how ordinary Beyonders are being suppressed and constantly facing danger, exploring this

wonderful world would be the most delightful thing… I hope that one day I can truly roam the Spirit World…

Dorian responded with a chuckle, "Malmouth's greatest ability is to swallow many items into its belly without causing them any harm. It's the equivalent of a mobile, hidden warehouse that almost no one can find.

"Of course, it can't store too much as its stomach has limited space. Also, it doesn't like people without talent in music. It would reject signing a contract with such people."

At least I can play the lyre… Just as Fors breathed a sigh of relief, Dorian instructed her to get him a black stew pot.

Realizing that he was about to concoct the potion right there and then, she maintained her expression, but her heart was frantically praying for an accident.

I don't want to drink the Apprentice potion again! That would waste a lot of time! If I had known that this would happen, then I would've been more honest… It's too late to tell the truth. Teacher Gray must've tried a divination attempt, but the outcome suffered interference. Confessing now would mean that there's a powerful person backing me or instigating me… In the midst of her thoughts, she saw Dorian turn around and hand her a bottle of the bubbling potion.

"Drink it and you'll become a Beyonder," Dorian said in a flat but very seductive tone.

Then he reassured her, "Don't worry. There won't be any problems with me here."

"Okay!" Fors gritted her teeth, received the Apprentice potion, and drank it all in one gulp.

At the same time, a thought flashed in her mind:

Honesty is the best policy…

…

The carriage stopped outside East Borough, and Klein, walking with a cane and a hat, entered the spacious slum in a relatively decent neighborhood.

As he walked forward, he saw two familiar figures emerge from the relatively clean apartment in front of him.

They were girls, one seventeen or eighteen years old, the other fifteen or sixteen years old—daughters of the laundry maid, Liv—Freja, and Daisy. The latter had once been kidnapped by Capim and was rescued by the Dark Emperor.

Daisy also spotted Klein and smiled brightly.

"Good afternoon, Detective Moriarty!"

Klein smiled and nodded before asking in puzzlement, "Daisy, don't you have public elementary school to attend?"

At the behest of reporters like Mike Joseph and the push by the Church of the Evernight Goddess, the Backlund government established a charity fund with Capim's estate, specifically to help women and families who had been hurt by Capim.

Daisy's family took advantage of the opportunity to move from a shabby apartment in an environment with poor security to the outskirts of East Borough. They moved from one room to two, separating the "laundry area" from the place where they ate and slept.

In addition, Daisy received a bursary for attending a public elementary school, and she was delighted that the charity fund was responsible for her tuition and meals costing three pence a week.

What puzzled Klein was that the public elementary school only had breaks on Sundays, so Daisy wasn't supposed to be here at this time.

"The school is very close, I took advantage of the afternoon break to return and help Freja bring the washed and dried laundry to a client. She and mother can't handle the workload," Daisy answered frankly.

The immediate effect of her going to school was that the amount of laundry which Liv and Freja could do every day decreased, obviously lowering their family income. If it wasn't for Mike's help applying for a grant from the charity, then they wouldn't be able to maintain their present lives.

Therefore, there was no doubt that Freja wouldn't be able to enter a public elementary school, and when Daisy and Klein talked about it, her eyes were filled with unconcealed envy and pain.

Despite not even being eighteen years old yet, all she could do was silently watch her sister attend school.

Klein noticed that detail and deliberately reminded Daisy, "You really should know that your mother and Freja are having a hard time. Treat them well."

Daisy nodded seriously and said, "I've thought about it. When things settle down, I'll teach Freja what I learned during the day at night and on Sundays. I'll be her only tutor!"

Freja's eyes suddenly blinked, and she couldn't help lowering her head.

"Good, very good," Klein praised her before bidding them farewell in a good mood, and he turned to another street.

He went to Black Palm Street to change out of his worker clothes, and just after he left the apartment where he was renting a room from, he saw an old middle-aged man walk over. He asked with a kind face, "Sir, have you heard of the original Creator?"

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CHAPTER 433
INTELLIGENCE PEDDLER

The original Creator? Klein was stunned for a moment, and then he immediately thought of the intelligence that Old Kohler had previously given him.

Recently, there had been people preaching the faith of the original Creator in East Borough, the dock area, and the factory district. It pushed the belief that "He" hadn't really passed away and that he existed in the body of every human being and every object. As long as one served "Him" wholeheartedly and praised "Him," then not only would "His" believers be redeemed after death, but they would also enter "His" kingdom. They would also suffer tremendous improvements in their present life, for instance, having sizzling meat to eat every day.

This was very close to the Aurora Order's theory of the mutated Creator, so Klein had decided that it was the secret organization which was behind it. He felt that they had begun to value the vast majority of the poor after the Lanevus incident.

They've already developed so arrogantly to even solicit people on the streets? Klein hesitated and replied, "I've heard of that."

The well-dressed middle-aged man immediately revealed a smile.

"Then, do you know about the incoming apocalypse? Do you know that the original Creator will create a sanctuary to protect 'His' believers?"

For a moment, Klein thought of going with the flow and be inoculated so as to slowly infiltrate the Aurora Order's periphery organization, so as to

gather the appropriate evidence and clues to take revenge on them for seeking the believers of The Fool. But after careful consideration, he felt that it was too dangerous. It was something that was tiring and troublesome for him to do alone, without any certainty of success.

In the end, he decided to inform the Machinery Hivemind about the current situation and leave it to the official organizations to handle!

After thinking through the problem, Klein's expression immediately darkened.

"I don't know, and I don't want to know!"

He strode forward, shaking off the middle-aged man and ignoring his shouts.

On the way out of East Borough, he watched carefully and found that the workers who had lost their jobs due to the off-season and the efficiency improvements from textile machines were grouped together. They were being comforted and were listening to the preaches from people of unknown identities.

The investigations of East Borough, the dock area, and factory district were completed two months ago. Why haven't the three Churches and parliament produced any concrete measures yet? The importance that they've placed on this issue must've increased. It's impossible for them to not notice the current situation… Is this a trap for bigger fish? That's very risky and can easily get out of hand! As Klein lampooned, he pushed the cap on his head as he walked out of East Borough and went straight to the Backlund Bridge area.

At noon, the Bravehearts Bar had just opened, and there were almost no drunkards present. Only the nearby, busy workers would come in and grab a simple lunch.

Klein mingled with them and spent ten pence on wheat bread with pork sausages and a glass of Southville beer, making himself appear rather rich.

After leisurely filling his stomach and finishing his beer, he looked at the bartender.

"Is Kaspars Kalinin here?"

He planned on replenishing some of his ordinary ammunition while he was here.

The bartender glanced at him.

"It seems like you haven't been here in a while?

"Kaspars is dead. It's said that he was a little restless while sleeping at night, wrapping himself in a tight bundle and suffocating himself in the end. Heh heh, I don't really believe that kind of thing would happen. I've only heard about such things in ghost stories, but that's what those black-and-white dogs say."

Black-and-white dogs were referring to the police who wore black-and-white checked uniforms.

Suffocating himself to death? That sounds like mysticism… Was it because the Rose School of Thought's High-Sequence Beyonder was unable to find Miss Sharron and Maric, and thus, they chose to kill someone to vent their anger? Where's the bearing of being a High-Sequence Beyonder? In that case, Kaspars wasn't able to contact Miss Sharron… Perhaps they've already left Backlund

Kaspars wasn't prepared for the dangers of the Beyonder world. If it were me, I wouldn't have returned to the Bravehearts Bar. I would've taken all the money I saved up and go to another city for a change in environment… However, under normal circumstances, a High-Sequence Beyonder wouldn't specially deal with such ordinary people. At most, they would force a

mediumship ritual without considering the aftereffects… As expected of the self-indulgent Rose School of Thought. To think a High-Sequence Beyonder would actually do such a thing…

While feeling surprised, Klein also felt pity for the black-market arms dealer.

The bartender wiped a cup and continued, "If you wish to buy some stuff, there's a new dealer."

"Who?" Klein asked in passing.

"Old Man. He's in Billiard room 3," the bartender said without looking up.

Klein immediately stood up, slowly walked towards that familiar place, and knocked on the unlocked door.

"Come in." A voice rang out.

This voice sounds a little familiar… Klein pushed open the door and looked inside.

Standing by the table was a boy that didn't look too old. He was dressed in an old overcoat, a brown bowler hat, and had bright red eyes. It was Ian, whom Klein had met when he first arrived in Backlund. Back then, he was entrusted with the case of Detective Zreal's disappearance and was ultimately involved in the conflict over the manuscripts of a third-generation difference machine. He had been forced to pay a high price to have Mr. A from the Aurora Order kill the Intis ambassador that was sent to the Loen Kingdom, Bakerland Jean Madan.

"It's you, Detective Moriarty?" Ian was startled.

He had deliberately stuck two whiskers above his mouth to make himself look older.

Klein smiled as he entered the billiard room and closed the door in passing.

"Long time no see."

He was initially surprised that Ian had appeared here and had become a black-market arms dealer, but then he thought of the details behind the matter and found that it made sense.

Klein being able to come to the Bravehearts Bar and find Kaspars Kalinin was all thanks to Ian's introduction.

This teenage boy definitely had some connections around here!

"Yeah." Ian wiped away his shocked expression and mumbled, "I went to Pritz Harbor for two months and found those guys to be so savage and cruel. They didn't even have the slightest bit of modesty or love for children, so I had no choice but to return to Backlund and do what I was good at. When Kaspars died, I decided to switch careers."

Before Klein could say anything, he added, "Mr. Detective, I've always kept in mind that I still owe you two requests."

*There's no need to explain so much, nor do I care what you've done in the past. Although I've always thought that your escape from MI9 was suspicious, I didn't care too much about it… *Klein picked up a cue stick, gestured, and said, "Other than dealing in black-market weapons, you seem to be selling information?"

"Yes," Ian answered very calmly. "What do you want to know? It's free."

Very straightforward… Feeling guilty about what happened to me previously? Klein pushed the cue stick forward and hit the ball, sending a red ball right into the middle pocket.

Without a trace of politeness, he straightened his body and said, "Recently, everyone has been looking for the believers of The Fool. There are many

bounties available. What news do you have?"

Ian thought for a moment and said, "Nothing.

"I even suspect whether The Fool has any believers since no one can find any clues."

…This is what you call blasting air with a cannon… Klein gave a silent, self-deprecating laugh before turning to ask, "In addition, there's another bounty. People are looking for a lecturer named Azik Eggers. I wish to know who was the one behind the bounty, so as to determine if I should involve myself in it. Heh, searching for people is very time-consuming."

Ian didn't directly answer; he surveyed his surroundings and lowered his voice.

"MI9."

MI9? It's not the Numinous Episcopate… It seems like it really was arranged by Ince Zangwill. He's trying to create conflict between Mr. Azik and MI9? Perhaps he knows some secret that he shouldn't be aware of? A series of thoughts flashed through Klein's mind. Finally, he smiled and said, "Looks like I don't have to worry about the bounty being false, but I'm afraid that the circumstances as to why Azik Eggers is being pursued by MI9 is because he knows some secret. That being the case, the day I obtain the bounty might be the last day of my life."

Ian spread his hands.

"I'm not sure about that.

"But you can provide only clues."

"Good suggestion." Without asking any more questions, Klein spent five soli, replenished some of his ordinary ammunition, and left the Bravehearts Bar.

He got on the rental carriage and looked out the window at the gloomy weather. Suddenly, he felt a little wistful.

Kaspars Kalinin is dead which also means that Miss Sharron and Maric will give up this "base." With me only being able to contact them unilaterally, it'll be hard to find them…

Unless they encounter some difficulties that require my help, or they have reached the stage of dealing with the evil spirit buried in the ruins. Otherwise, I'll likely not be meeting them again.

Although they can't be considered friends, we've cooperated with each other twice. I could interact with them as a Beyonder without hiding my face. Now, there are two fewer people of such people.

If it wasn't for the Desire Apostle, I would only have an oddity like the vampire, Emlyn White, who I can talk about mysticism with without any disguises.

Thankfully. Thankfully…

As he was sighing silently, an ethereal voice suddenly sounded in his ears.

"Is there something?"

Klein instantly shuddered, and only when he saw who was sitting in front of him did he heave a sigh of relief. He laughed in exasperation and said, "Miss Sharron, do you always appear all of a sudden like this?"

Dressed in a Gothic regal dress and a matching soft black hat, Sharron was sitting quietly on the other side of the carriage, her face as pale as ever.

"I'll knock on the window next time." Sharron nodded without emotion.

She didn't repeat the question, but she looked quietly at Klein in a reserved manner.

Knocking on the window all of a sudden? That's equally scary… Klein was in no hurry to mention the matter about the Human-skinned Shadow, and instead he asked, "Has the High-Sequence Beyonder left?"

"Yes," Sharron said tersely.

Klein was slightly relieved as he warned her, "It could also be a trap."

As he said this, he remembered something and quickly added, "I've finished reading the Book of Secrets, and I've obtained the corresponding information from other sources that praying to the Primordial Moon is prone to problems. It's best not to try."

"Alright." Sharron didn't ask why.

She paused for a second and said in an ethereal voice, "The Primordial Moon and the Chained God seem to be archenemies."

Because they can switch Sequences? Or could there be other reasons? Klein thought as he directed the conversation to what really mattered.

"Miss Sharron, do you know of any places with the characteristic of a Human-skinned Shadow?"

Like a puppet, Sharron listened quietly before nodding her head.

"Yes."

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CHAPTER 434
TOMB AND BOUNTY

She knows? Klein was overjoyed, and quickly asked, "Where?"

In his heart, he was already prepared to pay the "consultation fee."

Sharron sat there without moving and said, like a talking doll, "In one of the gatherings that Maric participated in, someone once discovered the tomb of an ancient noble. They explored the periphery but didn't dare to venture deep, but there were traces of Human-skinned Shadow activity.

"They hoped to recruit a team strong enough to completely explore the tomb and split the valuables equally."

*To seek help in a gathering of Beyonders who are not familiar with each other, how can all parties guarantee each other's credibility? What if there's no tomb at all, and it's just a trap? *Klein quickly thought and asked in response, "Did they succeed?"

"Yes," Sharron answered simply.

This… Klein temporarily didn't pursue the details. He suppressed his voice to avoid being overheard by the carriage driver.

"And then?"

"After that, they never appeared again," Sharron calmly recounted. "One of the members was a friend of Maric's, and he disappeared completely after that matter."

Without waiting for Klein to ask, she continued to speak with her ethereal voice.

"Maric found some of his friend's belongings. I used the method of divination to track them down to White Cliff Town, and I found a hidden entrance to the tomb at the riverbend of the Stratford River. Maric's friend was inside, but he was already dead."

"You went in?" Klein blurted out.

"No, I determined it using another method," Sharron explained. "That tomb gave me a sense of great danger. I didn't try to explore it."

At this point, she looked at Klein with her blue eyes.

"Without the help of a Sequence 4 Beyonder or a Sealed Artifact of a corresponding level, it would be best not to venture deep into that tomb."

Even you find it very dangerous. I don't need to go above the gray fog to divine it to know how terrifying it is… Klein looked down at the floor of the carriage and thought for a few seconds.

"Do you know which ancient noble's tomb it belongs to?"

Sharron did not pause in her reply.

"His last name is Amon."

Amon? A member of the family of that Amon who had possessed Little Sun's body and almost sneaked into the mysterious space above the gray fog? Klein used his ability as a Clown to control the slight twitch of his eyelids. He asked in puzzlement, "Are you sure?"

At this moment, a figure appeared in his mind—a black classic robe, a matching pointed hat, a broad forehead, a thin face, black eyes, black hair, and a crystal monocle.

Sharron's pale blonde hair shone through the mist like an oil painting drawn by a master, and she said in her usual flat tone, "According to the items obtained from the initial exploration, a member of the gathering who specializes in ancient history determined that the owner of the tomb came from the Tudor Dynasty of the Fourth Epoch. The family name is Amon."

It really is the Blasphemer family of the Fourth Epoch… This family isn't cursed like the Abraham family, nor was it destroyed directly by the Church of a certain goddess like the Antigonus family…

According to the special and powerful performance Amon showed in the City of Silver, the situation of this family might be comparable to that of Zaratul's. They were all secretly passed down, with the presence of High-Sequence Beyonders among their ranks, perhaps even with powerful angels. They protect certain crucial secrets, such as the "coordinates" of the Forsaken Land of the Gods…

The danger of a tomb left behind by such a family can be imagined. Perhaps Amon can borrow the power of certain changes to cast his gaze over from the distant Forsaken Land of the Gods… I can't use the perspective of a Low- or Mid-Sequence Beyonder to deduce the terror of a demigod…

Klein didn't ponder for long before denying the possibility of exploring the tomb of the Amon family.

Slightly disappointed, he looked up at Sharron.

"Is that place the only place with a Human-skinned Shadow?"

Sharron shook her head.

"No."

"Oh?" Klein's eyes lit up, and he assumed a listening posture.

Sharron said, her voice unchanged, "I've participated in a gathering. A Beyonder promised that as long as someone completes a mission given by her, she would satisfy any reasonable request. When it comes to ingredients, it is limited to those below that of High-Sequence Beyonder ingredients."

"In other words, she can give any Beyonder ingredient below that of High-Sequence Beyonders?" The first thought that came to Klein's mind was: *is she bragging?*

Even for the Church of the Evernight Goddess, only the Holy Cathedral, or in other words, the Cathedral of Serenity, would possess such a possibility!

Many of these ingredients weren't commonly needed because they weren't needed at all.

Upon hearing Klein's question, Sharron calmly replied, "She's a High-Sequence Beyonder."

*High-Sequence Beyonder? No wonder… That would be on the level of the high-ranking members of the Churches or secret organizations. Even if they don't belong to any party, they would still build up their own faction! However, the promise of any type of Beyonder ingredient below a High-Sequence potion definitely can't be completely be met… *Klein momentarily had such a thought.

Sharron simply added, "She said that certain ingredients would require a certain period of time."

That's more like it! Klein asked with interest, "What mission did she give?"

Sharron sat up straight and dignified.

"Investigate Hero Bandit Dark Emperor's true identity."

"…”

Klein believed that if he had been drinking water at that moment, then he wouldn't have been able to control himself and that he would've sprayed it across from him.

Who did I offend? Why am I the target of a High-Sequence Beyonder? He first lamented in Chinese, then he quickly analyzed the possible parties.

Members of the Twilight Hermit Order? Because the Hero Bandit Dark Emperor had killed the Desire Apostle, Beria?

Members of the Aurora Order? They drew links to The Fool from the tarot cards I left during the Capim incident, and they decided to investigate the Hero Bandit Dark Emperor?

Members of the three Churches and MI9? Just to find out the truth about the Capim affair?

Every one of them is possible, and none of them can be ruled out! Klein didn't show any abnormalities as he deliberated and asked, "Why is she investigating the true identity of the Hero Bandit Dark Emperor?"

"No one knows," Sharron replied in the simplest of terms.

Klein thought for two seconds and said after organizing his words, "What kind of person is she? I want to know if I should take this mission."

Sharron remained silent for two seconds, seemingly in recollection.

Then she described, "Female, above 1.70 meters tall, very well-proportioned, chestnut hair, was disguised, loves black leather boots, only occasionally attended the gatherings, and first appeared two months ago."

Loves wearing black leather boots, female, High-Sequence Beyonder… When these three keywords were put together, it immediately triggered a certain part of Klein's memories!

Back when he went to the Royal Museum to steal the Dark Emperor card, he had met a mysterious High-Sequence Beyonder in the reconstructed study of Emperor Roselle. She only revealed her feet in black leather boots, and when he borrowed the power of the gray fog to escape, he ended up running into the Devil dog due to the side effects of the Master Key and had to shout for help. Therefore, Klein Moriarty ended up meeting the female demigod again.

Her? Why would she look for Hero Bandit Dark Emperor? She's confirmed that the thief who stole the Card of Blasphemy is a Spirit Body and knows what would happen if a Spirit Body carries and contains the Dark Emperor card. Hence, she has locked onto the Hero Bandit Dark Emperor who has similar traits? Klein quickly thought of a very convincing possibility.

The only thing that confused him was how the other person knew that he had taken the Dark Emperor card and not any other cards, such as the Abyss card or The Sun card.

Unless she was targeting the Card of Blasphemy, and she had investigated beforehand that it was the Dark Emperor card… Well, Miss Sharron said that she joined the gathering for the first time more than two months ago. This matches the timing of Roselle's exhibition… Later, she occasionally participated without leaving Backlund, or perhaps, she returned regularly to search for the enemy who had taken the Dark Emperor's card… Klein's thoughts blazed through his mind as he gave a faint smile.

"I'll keep an eye out for her. I hope there's something to be gained."

She can forget about getting anything her entire life! He added inwardly without hesitation.

Sharron nodded almost imperceptibly and said nothing more about the Human-skinned Shadow.

Obviously, she only had two leads, but it was still better than the Vampire Emlyn White and Eye of Wisdom Isengard Stanton's circle.

Klein slowly exhaled, concealing his inward disappointment, and said with a respectful tone, "You and Maric aren't troubled by the curse anymore, are you?"

"There's only one Scarlet Lunar Corona," Sharron answered calmly.

The person who wore the Scarlet Lunar Corona was immune to the full moon's effects, a dream item for Mutants.

That is to say, one will be fine, and one will be in the same situation as before… When affected by the full moon, Maric will be driven to insanity, while Miss Sharron will lose her strength. It appears Maric is the one using it… Klein thought as he changed topics.

"Have you found a way to remove a Rampager's mental corruption on the Beyonder characteristic left behind by Wraith Steve?"

He casually asked this question without much hope. In his heart, he believed that there was a greater chance with The Sun.

"No." Sharron appeared like she was talking about someone else.

*Perhaps I will sell you this method in the future and hope that you have saved up your gold pounds… *Klein tersely acknowledged and was suddenly unsure of how to continue the conversation.

He paused for a few seconds before asking, "Where is White Cliff Town?"

"Backlund suburbs, south of the bridge," Sharron answered succinctly.

She looked into Klein's eyes again.

"Nothing else?"

"Nothing." Klein first shook his head, and then asked, "Can I tell others about the tomb?"

"Sure."

Sharron's figure rapidly faded before she disappeared from the carriage.

Perhaps it was to conceal herself, as she never had the habit of using perfume; thus, leaving behind an empty environment once more.

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CHAPTER 435
AGGREGATION EFFECT

8 p.m., Harvest Church.

After changing back into his usual attire, Klein looked around once as he pressed down on the edge of his hat. Then, he walked into the hall and headed for Emlyn White who was standing before three rows of candles on the right side of the hall.

At the vampire's feet was a black suitcase, its surface was seemingly covered with a layer of a wall of spirituality.

Upon sensing Detective Sherlock Moriarty coming in, Emlyn was first pleased before revealing an alarmed look.

He bent down to grab his suitcase and took a few steps back, closing the gap he had with Father Utravsky who was focused on praying.

Are you afraid that I'll rob you of the Beyonder ingredients… Klein stopped three meters away, then he smiled and said, "Let me first verify if it's the two ingredients I need."

Emlyn White ran his hand through his hair, lifted the leather case to his chest and undid the buckle.

The wall of spirituality shattered as a result, turning into a light breeze that blew through the prayer hall.

Klein, who had long activated his Spirit Vision, immediately saw bursts of strange and dazzling light. It was the spiritual radiance released by many

Beyonder characteristics.

There were two small boxes inside the suitcase. One was made of tin and had many patterns on it. It looked spartan and heavy. The other was only a cardboard box.

Holding the black leather suitcase in one hand, Emlyn opened the slightly tarnished silver-colored tin case. The item inside looked like a yellowish brown peeled walnut with the grooves and ridges of a brain.

Along with the flickering of the candle flame, its appearance constantly changed. Sometimes it would turn gray and appear wrinkled. At other times, it would turn dark brown and extremely smooth. The colors would interweave, outlining a featureless "face."

At the sight of it, Klein felt the power of the potion, which he had completely digested and assimilated, stir a little, like a magnet encountering an opposite pole.

He was able to control his body with his Clown powers as he suppressed the feeling of attraction. He knew deep down that the item was a genuine mutated pituitary gland of a Thousand-faced Hunter.

It seems like what Emperor Roselle speculated in his diary is possible, that High-Sequence items of the same pathway would unconsciously draw Low- and Mid-Sequence Beyonders to them, with a tendency to draw them together… Although the Thousand-faced Hunter's mutated pituitary gland is still very far from a High Sequence and doesn't have that kind of special force of attraction, it contains enough Beyonder characteristics. Moreover, I've digested the Sequence 7 potion. When the person and ingredients are sufficiently close, such a phenomenon will appear…

I didn't notice it before because, firstly, the corresponding Beyonder ingredients are of low quality, and secondly, my own strength is lacking, and I wasn't of a high enough Sequence… Right, every time I digested the potion, an illusory starry sky would appear around me. There were many

resplendent lights within, and they would pull one another in an attempt to converge… This might be a scene of the law of convergence of Beyonder characteristics of the same pathway, and the greater the "quality," the stronger the pull…

Then, will Beyonder characteristics of similar pathways conform to this law?

Klein's expression didn't change as he recalled the records in Roselle's diary, and combined with his three experiences of digesting potions, he was able to determine the existence of a certain law.

Emlyn White glanced at him warily, quickly closed the tin box and opened the paper box next to it.

The paper box was padded with thick cotton, and in the center of the box was a glass bottle that could hold 200 milliliters of liquid. The bottle was half-empty, while the rest of it was filled with a viscous liquid that could change its color based on the change of light.

"Any other problems?" Emlyn closed the paper box.

"Let me confirm once more." Klein took out a gold coin and let it spin between his fingers, as though it had a life of its own.

Ding!

The gold coin bounced up and fell down again, landing in Klein's palm.

It was heads, indicating a positive response.

Klein nodded slightly and took out stacks after stacks of notes from various pockets. They were in ten-pound, five-pound, and one-pounds denominations.

"1,450 pounds." Klein placed the pile of cash on a nearby piece of furniture.

"Retreat a few steps, no, five steps!" Emlyn called out cautiously.

Klein smiled, raised his hands, and took five steps back.

Emlyn cautiously moved closer, checking to see if there was any blank paper in the stack of cash.

After doing a slight count, he threw the leather suitcase in his hand towards Klein.

Klein was startled and with his agile moves, he accurately caught the suitcase.

He was afraid that the blood of the Thousand-faced Hunter would seep out after the bottle shattered.

And Emlyn White took the opportunity to collect the bills and quickly retreated to the side of Father Utravsky.

Only then did he heave a sigh of relief and seriously checked the amount and their authenticity.

At the sight, Klein recalled the scene and suddenly felt ashamed.

He and Emlyn had made a perfectly fine Church of Mother Earth cathedral look like the scene of an arms or drugs trade…

After confirming the condition of the two ingredients, Klein snapped his fingers, igniting a match he had specially separated in his clothes and allowed the soaring red flames to envelop his body.

When the flames descended back down, he had already disappeared.

As he often met Emlyn White at the Harvest Church, he didn't mind if Father Utravsky found out that he was a Beyonder who had helped him

eliminate his dark personality. He even felt that this would give him some form of friendship.

Emlyn, who was counting the money, looked up and was stunned for a good two seconds.

He muttered to himself in a low voice, "My suitcase…

"My tin box…”

…

On the lamp-lit street, a carriage rolled over the puddles and headed for the edge of Empress Borough.

Fors has told her good friend, Xio Derecha, that she had a teacher and had ended up consuming another Apprentice potion.

After confirming that she didn't have any signs of losing control, Xio looked outside the window at the gas lamps, which weren't much taller than she was, and asked in puzzlement, "I've always wondered why they're preserved as ingredients and not as a potion. Your teacher could've concocted the potion beforehand and brought them here, so there was no need for him to do it on the spot."

Fors gave a faint smile and said, "I've asked him about this before. He said that there are two main reasons. One is that different Beyonder ingredients have different uses, and when they're made into a potion, they cannot be used flexibly. The second is that when the Beyonder characteristics are solidified, they can be kept forever, but after it becomes a potion, that won't be the case unless one uses a special isolation technique."

"Why?" Xio asked in surprise. "This isn't an ordinary type of medicine or Beyonder weapon in which its spirituality will continue to dissipate and weaken."

Fors wasn't in the mood to laugh, but she had no choice but to maintain her smile.

"It's not a problem about the characteristic loss, but that once Beyonder ingredients become potions, not only can humans absorb them, even other creatures or materials without life can. It's just relatively slower. For example, if I use a glass bottle to store the potion, it might appear fine, but after a few days, the glass bottle would 'finish' drinking the potion, becoming a special mystical item. It might even gain intelligence. Of course, my teacher said that such a situation has very huge side effects, akin to what a Rampager leaves behind.

"The seven Churches and some hidden factions have special isolation techniques, but it's rather troublesome, and they won't use it on Low- or Mid-Sequence potions."

"How amazing!" Xio sighed.

She took another look outside and said in a low voice, "We're almost there."

She and Fors were here to attend the Beyonder gathering which Mr. A was holding.

Fors smiled while feeling her heart bleed.

"I hope there's the Spirit Eater's stomach pouch."

Her teacher, Dorian Gray, had taught her the acting method before he left. He even gave her the potion formula for Trickmaster and got her to attempt to find the Beyonder ingredients on her own. If she hadn't gathered all of the ingredients by the time she digested the Apprentice potion, she could write to him for help.

This left Fors in a rather lost state.

Why did I spend large sums of money to purchase the Trickmaster formula and the acting method?

Up to now, the greatest and invaluable help the Tarot Club has given me were the things Mr. Hanged Man and Miss Justice taught me to take note of, as well as Mr. Fool's interference in divination. Otherwise, Teacher would've long discovered a problem with me, and I wouldn't have become his student…

Sigh, I'll just consider it as the price for neutralizing the full moon's curse…

As the thought crossed her mind, Fors suddenly noticed that the house where Mr. A had his gathering held had visibly collapsed, and there were even scorch marks in many places.

There was a fierce battle here… Who dealt with Mr. A? An official organization? Fors immediately signaled to Xio and instructed the carriage driver outside, "Not here, two more streets up ahead."

…

"Aurora Order's base found. Terrorist organization suffers severe setback."

The next day, Klein saw this article the moment he flipped the newspapers open.

"Let's hope Mr. A died in this ambush." He drew the crimson moon on his chest in solemnity.

He had already thrown the Thousand-faced Hunter's blood and mutated pituitary gland from last night above the gray fog to ensure that they wouldn't be lost.

Even if I die, they won't be lost… Klein chewed on a piece of bacon with great ease.

After last night's transaction, his cash reserves had fallen back below 1,000 pounds, leaving him with only 735 pounds, which was only enough to buy a Deep-sea Naga's hair. After that, he didn't have the ability to purchase the Human-skinned Shadow's characteristic.

Without any better clues or money, Klein rested at home the entire morning. After lunch, he dressed up and headed straight for the Backlund Bridge area.

He had previously made an agreement with Carlson of the Machinery Hivemind to find him at the Lucky Bar near the West Balam dock if he had any intelligence. If the intelligence was especially important and Carlson wasn't there, he was to go straight to Lever Cathedral. After all, Sherlock Moriarty wasn't a member of a secret organization, so there was no need for caution.

There weren't many customers at Lucky Bar in the afternoon, so Klein instantly saw Carlson sitting and drinking alone in a corner of the bar.

He walked over, knocked on the table, and reported with a suppressed voice, "Many people in East Borough are spreading the faith of the original Creator."

Carlson sipped some alcohol brewed from pure malt and replied noncommittally, "I'm aware."

As expected… Klein commented silently before smiling.

"I have a clue regarding a Fourth Epoch tomb of a noble."

"Ah!"

The glass in Carlson's hand paused as he looked at Klein in surprise, and he unconsciously nudged his thick glasses.

But he noticed that Detective Sherlock Moriarty wasn't continuing to describe the matter, but looking at the bartender a few steps away while saying with a smile, "One glass of Southville beer."

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CHAPTER 436
KLEIN'S REQUEST

Seeing the white foam of the Southville beer being placed in front of Sherlock Moriarty, Carlson finally came to his senses.

It was only when the bartender was a certain distance away from them did he ask in a suppressed voice, "What do you want?"

Klein picked up his glass and took a sip. He took a few seconds to savor the bitter taste of the malt and the faint sweetness from it.

"Cheers!" He looked sideways at Carlson and smiled before raising his glass.

Without hesitation, Carlson shook his head and refused the offer, mumbling, "You have beer, while I have strong distilled liquor. It's not suitable for a toast."

Klein was only going through the motions, so he once again took a sip of his Southville beer, looked straight ahead, and chuckled.

"What I want is very simple.

"I'm not sure what's inside the tomb, so I can only describe it rather vaguely… Well, I hope that I can choose an item from the spoils of your tomb exploration. I'm not greedy, and my request will not involve high Sequence items. I wouldn't dare to take it even if they were one of the options.

"If you find nothing or there are only high Sequence items, then I don't want anything. Of course, I believe that when the latter happens, you wouldn't be stingy with giving me a sum of cash that's consistent with my contribution."

After hearing about the Amon family's tomb from Miss Sharron yesterday, he had came up with rough plans.

The first plan was to blow the copper whistle, contact Mr. Azik, and join forces to explore the tomb.

However, there were many potential problems with this plan. Firstly, he was unsure of the amount of strength Azik, who was still in the midst of finding his lost memories, had regained. Secondly, Azik was being pursued by MI9, so it was very easy for him and Azik to land in trouble. Thirdly, there was a high chance that Klein would end up reappearing in the sights of Sealed Artifact 0-08 once again. Of course, he could also consider using the help of the gray fog to make contact or embark on the expedition. However, blowing the copper whistle above the gray fog made it impossible to summon the messenger; therefore, ending all of his subsequent plans.

More importantly, Klein didn't dare to reveal the secret of the space above the fog to Azik Eggers whose identity remained a mystery.

Therefore, he finally chose the second method, which was to use his identity as an informant to submit the information to the Machinery Hivemind and ask for a reasonable reward.

When it came to the number of High-Sequence Beyonders, which faction could have more than the seven Churches?

According to what Klein knew, there were close to ten High-Sequence Beyonders in the Church of the Evernight Goddess. In other words, nearly half of the thirteen archbishops and nine high-ranking deacons had reached or surpassed Sequence 4. This wasn't considering the adorer of the Goddess, the Pope who helmed the Church.

Even if the situation regarding the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery was inferior in this aspect, it couldn't be that inferior. Their archbishop of the Backlund diocese, Horamick Haydn, was a High-Sequence Beyonder.

And as such, for an orthodox church, with all its resources accumulated to date, it wouldn't value the Mid-Sequence items very, very, very much. Klein believed that he could negotiate a reasonable "price."

Simply put, the core element of the second plan was: find an organization for any difficulties!

Upon hearing Klein's offer, Carlson paused for a second, then blurted out, "Aren't you a believer in God?"

I've always had the Goddess in my heart… Klein drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

"It is because of my belief in God that I've told you this information, not to the Nighthawks through Mr. Stanton.

"God said to let those who wish to be strong, be strong. Only by becoming stronger and having more money can I have more access to different channels and resources, and thus provide you with better and more effective information."

In order to convince the Machinery Hivemind, he had specifically spent the morning reading through the "Steam and Machinery Bible" that he had bought earlier. He then found a few sentences from the deity that met his requirements and memorized them.

Carlson was momentarily unable to provide a rejoinder. He just sat there, stunned, to the point of forgetting to drink.

Seeing this, Klein quickly added, "Moreover, this will help you establish a harmonious and efficient relationship with new-generation informants. As

long as you spread the news of the rewards I receive as a result of this, as well as keeping your promise without going back on your word, then I believe that the other informants will be deeply moved and be greatly motivated to do their best to gather useful information for you.

"Of course, I wish that you use my pseudonym when advertising this."

Carlson listened with a blank face, picked up his glass, and gulped down a mouthful. He almost choked.

"Cough. Sherlock, the real you is completely different from what I remember about you from before." He sighed.

The Detective Sherlock Moriarty in his memories was good at analysis and reasoning, he was extremely calm and polite, and, with a great sense of justice, had offered very effective advice. He was an outstanding believer in God.

Yet now, he was…

Klein took a sip of his beer and chuckled.

"Everyone has their different sides. Using a single facade to face everything is prone to error. This is a problem you have to pay attention to when making deductions."

After calming down for a moment, Carlson stood up and said, "I have no right to agree to such a request. I will report it immediately, so wait here for a while."

"Alright." Klein waved to the bartender and added a serving of potato wedges.

By the time he leisurely finished his food and beer, Carlson returned to the bar with the deacon of the Machinery Hivemind, Ikanser Bernard.

Ikanser looked around, and seeing that there was no one around, he said in a deep voice, "There's no problem with your request, but there's one condition to add on—items with strong side effects and curses are not among the items available for selection."

What I want is an ingredient… Klein immediately laughed.

"Alright!

"Dare I ask again if is this your personal decision or the response from the higher-ups?"

"I have the right to make such a decision." Ikanser used his hat to press down on his fluffy hair. "But since it concerns an aristocratic tomb from the Fourth Epoch, I had sent a telegram to the archbishop, and he didn't object to it in his reply."

"Alright." Klein drew another triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest. "I'll give you the information now."

Ikanser shook his head subconsciously.

He looked around and pointed to a billiard room.

"Let's talk inside."

*This deacon, who is always publicly placed on trial by the mirror called Arrodes, is quite experienced… *Klein murmured and followed Ikanser and Carlson into the billiard room while making sure that the adjacent rooms were empty.

Klein paused for a few seconds and said with some deliberation, "The thing is, there was a Beyonder who found a hidden tomb at the mouth of the Stratford River in White Cliff Town. He searched the periphery and found some items.

"After that, they recruited people and did further explorations, but no one returned. If you search carefully over there, you will definitely find the corresponding traces."

After listening carefully, Ikanser asked, "Are you sure it's an aristocratic tomb from the Fourth Epoch?"

"The items on the outside can prove that they're members of the Tudor Dynasty's Amon family," Klein answered truthfully. He then warned him, "The Beyonders who died in there weren't weak at all, and there were quite a few of them. I believe that this tomb isn't something that can be explored by those below High-Sequence Beyonders."

"Amon…" Ikanser frowned instinctively.

It could be seen that, as a deacon, he had the authority to know some ancient secret history.

Without waiting for Klein to emphasize it again, he looked up and said, "We will collect the relevant information first before we act."

"A Fourth Epoch aristocratic tomb is very dangerous. Don't tell this information to anyone else, or explore it yourself. Otherwise, you and your friends will only lose their lives."

If I dared, I wouldn't be sitting here… Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh and said, "My reputation has always been good."

After making the deal, he watched Ikanser and Carlson leave before putting on his hat and sauntering out of Lucky Bar.

Towards the nobles of the Fourth Epoch, as well as the Amon family, the Machinery Hivemind will still be very cautious. They'll have to have at least several days of preparing before they take action… Prudence… Klein's random thoughts froze on a single word.

He thought of another thing that could be described as being prudent.

After Roselle had joined the ancient organization suspected of being the Twilight Hermit Order, he had actually never mentioned its name in his own secret diary which was written in Chinese. Each time, he would refer to it by referring to it with the appropriate characteristics.

This level of prudence was a very suspicious phenomenon!

Why didn't Emperor Roselle dare to mention the name of that organization, even when it's written in Chinese? This is completely different from the style of writing where he dared to write anything in his diary… What was he afraid of, or what was he worried about? Could it be that as long as he said or wrote down the name of the Twilight Hermit Order, then they would be made aware of it it no matter which language he used? Does one of their members or a Sealed Artifact they possess have such abilities? A guess popped up in Klein's mind, but there was no way to confirm it unless he was willing to take the risk.

I'll first assume it's true and that I haven't been perceived by them, because the channeling of the Desire Apostle's spirit had been done above the gray fog. Informing Miss Justice of it was also done in response to a prayer using the gray fog… Well, it's almost Monday, and I have to remind Miss Justice at the Tarot Club not to say or write down the name "Twilight Hermit Order." As for the reason, she can understand it by herself with me simply giving her a look… Klein quickly made his next arrangements and strode out of Lucky Bar.

Seeing that it was still early, he took a horse carriage to the Quelaag Club, intending to spend the afternoon there.

As soon as he entered the hall, he saw the equestrian teacher, Talim Dumont.

This descendant of blue-blood was seated in a corner, holding a glass of scarlet grape wine. His face was rosy, and he was sipping it in high spirits.

"You seem to be in a good mood, Talim," Klein smiled and greeted him.

Talim chuckled and said, "Because the new year is coming."

Then, rather excitedly, he asked, "Sherlock, do you know what it's like to really like someone?"

"…" Klein showed a fake smile.

"I'm sorry, I'm still single."

Talim finished the rest of his wine, stood up, waved his hand, and said, "That's a pity. Well, I have to get busy."

"By the way, thank you for introducing Mr. Framis Cage," Klein recalled the investment of the bike project and sincerely expressed his gratitude. "When are you free these days? I'd like to get you to bring me around to sample some of Backlund's delicacies."

"After the new year." Talim put on his hat and walked with a smile to the reception hall.

Has this fellow entered the season of love? Klein couldn't help but mutter.

Just as he turned around and took a few steps, he suddenly heard a heavy thud.

Klein jerked his head back and saw Talim Dumont on the ground, his left hand clamped tightly at his chest where his heart was. His body was convulsing nonstop.

This… Klein hurried over.

But at this moment, Talim had already spat out all of the white foam on his mouth, losing his last breath of life.

In just a few seconds, he had turned into a dead corpse.

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CHAPTER 437
OBITUARY

This wasn't the first time Klein had seen someone familiar die in front of him, but it was the most abrupt and unforeseen death. The expression on Talim Dumont's face when he had asked about what it felt to really like someone was a vivid expression of hidden excitement and flaunting, but one which couldn't be directly shared due to the need of being careful as a result of certain factors.

*That was too fast… Normal diseases do not cause death so quickly! *Klein's expression was solemn as he lightly tapped his molars to activate his Spirit Vision.

He dropped to one knee and crouched down. He saw Talim Dumont's aura and the colors of his emotions fading rapidly.

Furthermore, there were strands of black gas wrapped around his heart like a snake which were gradually dimming.

A Beyonder ability similar to a curse? Klein instantly made a preliminary conclusion.

At this moment, a nearby red-vested attendant and a servant girl in a black-and-white dress ran over. They looked at the dead body on the ground in horror—his eyes were wide and round, and the corners of his mouth still had remnant white foam.

Klein closed his eyes and instructed in a deep voice, "Go to the nearby police station and tell them someone died here."

"Yes, Mr. Moriarty." The red-vested attendant immediately turned around and ran out the door, so flustered that he even forgot to put on his coat.

Under the watchful gaze of the crowd, Klein didn't check Talim's belongings, nor did he try to pull out a few strands of hair for a divination attempt when he wasn't around anyone.

His identity was already considered semi-official, so he could use the power of the Machinery Hivemind to conduct a follow-up investigation. There was no need for him to act as a lone hero.

Thinking of the many times he had played cards with Talim Dumont, and how he had introduced clients and investors, and the love story that had been hanging in his mind for so long, Klein couldn't help but take a long, slow, deep breath.

Who's Talim's murderer?

*Which Beyonder, who's adept at curses, did Talim offend? *

Judging from his attitude today, he should be in a very happy and calm state, completely unaware of the fact that he has provoked a terrifying character…

Questions flashed through Klein's mind, but his lack of understanding about Talim Dumont resulted in a lack of soil to nurture any inspiration.

When the police arrived, he was questioned as a witness and that wasted quite a bit of his time.

It wasn't until all of this was over that Klein had a chance to leave Hillston Borough and head back to Lucky Bar in the Backlund Bridge area.

Carlson was still there drinking; the only difference being that his drink had been exchanged from a strong distilled liquor made from pure malt to golden, frothy beer.

Klein raised his right hand, covered his mouth, and squeezed over. He lightly knocked on the table and said, "Is your job to drink here every day?"

Carlson jumped in fright as he turned his head, relaxing only when he saw that it was Sherlock Moriarty.

"You… What is it now?"

This reaction is very familiar… Klein sighed silently and said gravely, "There is a case involving Beyonders."

Carlson looked around and saw that Lucky Bar already had quite a number of patrons. They were either hollering over their glasses or eager to fight in the ring.

"Follow me, let's play a round of billiards." Carlson nudged his thick glasses and carried his beer to an empty billiard room.

Klein followed, closing the door behind him.

"Your alcohol tolerance seems pretty good," he said in passing.

"No, I just drink very slowly." Carlson put down his glass and picked up the cue stick.

Then, he added inexplicably, "And I'd like some alone time lately."

I don't care about that… Klein pursed his lips and said, "I encountered a death at the Quelaag Club in Hillston Borough. That was a friend of mine, a noble descendant, and an equestrian teacher. He's usually healthy and had recently been in a very good mental state, but just now, he suddenly died in front of me. It looked like a heart attack, but my Spirit Vision told me that he might've been cursed."

"You're adept at Spirit Vision?" Carlson asked subconsciously.

What sort of details did Mr. Stanton fabricate for me? After becoming a Machinery Hivemind informant, they never even asked me which pathway I was, or which Sequence I'm at, nor did they try to find out about my origins and background… Of course, letting an informant keep certain secrets of their own is also a common tactic used by official organizations… Klein frankly responded, "Yes, the chest of the deceased had some decaying, illusory black gas."

"It does involve the possibility of a curse and a Beyonder." Carlson didn't ask further as he slowly nodded. "Hillston Borough… That's the territory of our Machinery Hivemind."

In the northwest of Backlund, which was the heart of the metropolis, Empress Borough and Cherwood Backlund came under the Mandated Punisher's jurisdiction. The western and northern areas came under the Nighthawks, and Hillston Borough and Backlund Bridge area came under the Machinery Hivemind.

Having said this, Carlson looked at Klein and attempted to confirm the details.

"What deity does your friend believe in?"

After thinking carefully for a few seconds, Klein replied hesitantly, "The Lord of Storms."

"A believer of the Lord of Storms… Is he the only deceased?" Carlson asked with a frown.

"Yes," Klein gave an affirmative answer.

Carlson chalked the cue stick and sighed.

"We have no right to take the case. This is under the Mandated Punishers.

"But I will pass on your information to them."

In the Loen Kingdom, the principle of jurisdiction over Beyonder events was first to divide them according to their beliefs. If they involved the followers of multiple deities, then it would be decided according to who held jurisdiction over the area.

Klein was no stranger to this. He had no intention of making things difficult for Carlson, so he earnestly said, "Thank you. I hope they can find the real killer as soon as possible."

Carlson picked up the glass of beer beside him and took a sip.

"He's a descendant of blue-blood. The Mandated Punishers will definitely take it seriously."

Pausing for a second, he looked at Klein and said in a low voice, "I find it hard to believe that you've only been in Backlund for about three months.

"You seem to have established a wide range of social connections and possess lots of resources here."

"Some people are naturally adept at this." Klein shook his head with a self-deprecating laugh before bidding farewell.

By the time he got back to Minsk Street, it was completely dark and the gas lamps lining the streets were being lit by workers.

Although his relationship with Talim Dumont didn't go deep, he was an acquaintance he met nearly every week. He was a friend he would play cards with every now and then, and Talim was rather warm and had always exalted him as a great detective. Furthermore, he had practiced what he preached by introducing clients and investors.

His passing also made Klein feel sad, making him fully aware of his helplessness towards fate.

Other than that, he was also very angry. He was angry at the murderer who had cursed Talim to death.

I hope that they can figure out what happened. I hope that the Mandated Punishers doesn't run out of manpower because of Duke Negan's assassination case… Klein sighed as he got off the carriage and walked towards the gate.

In the process, he discovered that there was no light at the Sammers house next door.

It looks like they're on their way to Desi Bay… Is this the new year atmosphere in Backlund? Yet, I don't feel anything at all… Klein momentarily felt melancholic.

With these emotions in mind, he went to bed early and woke up at seven in the morning.

In an attempt to change his mood, Klein decided to bake a homemade cake today.

"I'll buy the ingredients after breakfast," he whispered, drinking his milk and flipping through the newspapers.

Soon, he saw an "obituary" in the Tussock Times: "My beloved son, Talim Dumont, passed away on 18 December due to a sudden heart disease. His funeral will be held at the Crown Cemetery at exactly 9 a.m. on 21 December."

In the Northern Continent, due to reanimations, it was already an ancient tradition to be buried as quickly as possible after one's death. Of course, this was on the premise that there was no shortage of money for a funeral.

Sudden heart disease? Is this the final result of the investigation? Or could it be that the Mandated Punishers are trying to lull the culprit? Klein frowned, unable to make a judgment.

Perhaps I can go above the gray fog to see if it's a trap set up by the Mandated Punishers, but there's a high probability of failure. After all, I don't have one of his items with me, nor was I targeted… He took a breath, calmed down, and methodically filled his stomach.

The subsequent attempt didn't exceed Klein's expectations. He could only leave Minsk Street and take a bus to Hillston Borough to visit Isengard Stanton.

The great detective walked in the warm room, pointed to the front, and said, "Sherlock, would you like some breakfast? My chef's skills aren't worse than mine."

"No, I've already had breakfast," Klein shook his head and declined.

Isengard stopped in his tracks and casually asked, "Where are you going to spend the new year's? I'm planning on, no—returning to Lenburg."

"I haven't confirmed it yet. Perhaps Midseashire," Klein said, perfunctorily.

"The scenery there was originally pretty good, but unfortunately, there's an abundance in coal and iron resources, there was also a rather developed shipping industry." Isengard straightened his collar and touched the pipe in his pocket. "You seem to be a little anxious?"

"Mr. Stanton, I have something to ask you." Klein took the opportunity when asked the question to relate, in detail, Talim Dumont's death, the results of his Spirit Vision, his advice to the Machinery Hivemind, and what he had seen in this morning's obituary.

Of course, he had hidden the fact that he had become an informant for the Machinery Hivemind. He only said that for his friend, he had found an official Beyonder he got to know due to the Desire Apostle case.

"Do you think this is a trap by the Mandated Punishers?" he finally asked.

Holding the pipe, Isengard said thoughtfully, "I've been trying to avoid the Mandated Punishers, and I don't know enough about the situation.

"I'll get someone to find out. If there's any news, then I'll write to you."

"Okay, thank you." Klein bowed sincerely.

In the evening, he received a letter specially sent from Isengard. There was only one sentence in the letter: "This case isn't handled by the Mandated Punishers. The royal family has taken the case by claiming that Talim Dumont is a noble."

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CHAPTER 438
INVITATION

The royal family… Klein held the letter he received from Isengard Stanton and silently murmured to himself.

He looked up and outside the window, and he saw the rain pattering down. The gas lamps on the streets were giving off quiet halos.

Inside the living room, the coffee table was neat and tidy, with a few stacks of newspapers placed in the corner. There was silence all around him.

Klein sat on the sofa as he leaned forward a little. He sat there silently for a long time.

After nearly ten minutes, he exhaled and shook his head. Slowly and heavily, he tossed the letter into the trash can.

He slowly stood up and expressionlessly walked to the second floor.

And in the trash can, Isengard Stanton's letter caught fire silently and quickly crumpled into black ashes.

…

On Monday morning, Klein stood in front of the mirror, pressed his right thumb and middle finger to his temples, and rubbed them with a little more strength.

When he was done, he turned on the faucet, lowered his body, splashed the cold tap water onto his face, and washed his face while having a fit at the

cold.

After freshening himself up, he hung up the towel, walked to the first floor, and simply made a single-sided, well-done fried eggs with buttered toast.

Of course, a cup of black tea with a few slices of lemon quenched his thirst and reduced the cloy sensation he was feeling.

After breakfast, as he was idly flipping through the rest of the newspapers, Klein suddenly heard the tinkling of the doorbell.

Who is it? A new commission? Could it be that the Machinery Hivemind has already finished exploring the Amon family's tomb? No, it can't be that fast… Klein muttered as he put away his napkin and newspapers and walked slowly to the door.

When he held the handle, the image of the visitor outside the door appeared in his mind.

It was an elderly gentleman dressed to a tee. His snow-white shirt was starched, and a thick grayish-blue vest completely hid his belly. The long tailcoat had sharp lines without any blemishes on it.

The gentleman was wearing a pair of shiny leather shoes, so shiny that it was impossible to tell if he had walked through the rain or mud.

He wore a pair of white knitted gloves, with silver hair at his temples. His face was deeply wrinkled, and his light brown eyes were so serious that they didn't contain a hint of a smile.

I don't know him… Klein mumbled and opened the door.

"May I know who you're looking for?" he asked politely.

The elderly gentleman took off his hat, pressed it to his chest, and saluted in the most standard manner.

"Mr. Sherlock Moriarty, I'm a butler who has come to invite you in place of my master."

"Do I know your esteemed master? Why is he looking for me?" Klein's head was completely filled with questions.

But at this moment, he had already noticed a carriage parked across the cement road. It had a deep black outer shell, and there was a curtain on the inside of the window. It was obvious that it was nothing ordinary.

There's luxury amidst being low-key… Klein looked closely and suddenly saw that there was a coat of arms in a conspicuous part of the carriage.

The main body of the coat of arms was a vertical sword facing down, and the hilt of the sword had a red crown.

That's the… Sword of Judgment… It's the Sword of Judgment representing the royal Augustus family! Klein's heart palpitated as he roughly understood the butler's background.

Perhaps he's a rather powerful Beyonder… Klein made a guess.

The professional and stern butler didn't pay attention to his scrutiny. He revealed a polite smile and said, "You have never met my master, but in a sense, you do know him. You have been providing him clues about the organization that is symbolized by the tarot cards, and he has paid for the money you need."

As expected, it's the important figure that Talim mentioned. I've been using false information to fleece for funds and even submitted all the reimbursements that Old Kohler required to him… I can't refuse his invitation now, especially when Talim is dead… Klein pondered for two seconds and said, "Did your master come to me due to Talim's death?"

"Yes, Talim was his friend. He was sad and confused by his death, and he heard that you were there when it happened," the old butler articulated

clearly.

No, I wasn't… Klein subconsciously wanted to deny it, but he ultimately could only nod.

"Yes, I saw Talim die in front of me."

"It's really a sad and regretful thing," the butler said in a sincere tone. "Are you willing to accept my master's invitation?"

Do I have any reason to refuse? That would just make me look very suspicious! I might even be killed on the spot by you… Klein looked at him and said, "I happen to have nothing planned this morning."

"Alright then. Mr. Moriarty, please." The old butler bent down slightly, extended his right white-gloved hand, and pointed at the carriage on the opposite side of the cement road.

Sigh, I've been trying to avoid getting involved with important figures. In the end, I have no choice but to face the person behind Talim after his death… I wonder if this would attract attention or lead to more in-depth background checks… I have to plan ahead and be ready to give up my identity and this foothold at any time… Also, I need to get the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic and the Deep-sea Naga's hair and advance to Faceless as soon as possible! In that case, my ability to resist risks would more than double! When Klein put on his coat and hat and walked to the carriage with the royal coat of arms, he had already thought of the subsequent developments.

At this moment, the servant the old butler brought with him opened the door for him.

Stepping on the thick brown carpet, Klein looked at the wooden cabinets containing red wine, white wine, champagne, Lanti, and Black Rand, along with the crystal glasses. Klein felt rather restricted as he sat by the window.

Lanti referred to strong distilled spirits made from pure malt. There were many types, such as the sailors' favorite Lanti Proof. The bottles displayed in the cabinets were obviously of high quality. As for Black Rand, they referred to strong distilled wines mixed with other fermented grains, which, like Lanti, was something unique to Loen.

As the carriage drove through the wet streets, Klein asked in passing, "Are we going to Empress Borough?"

"No, my master is waiting for you at the Red Rose Manor on the outskirts of Empress Borough." The old butler didn't hide anything.

Looks like this is the royal family's manor… Klein thought for a moment, then he asked with a smile, "Can you tell me your master's identity now?"

The old housekeeper's back, which was already straight, became even straighter as he raised his chin.

"He is the descendant of the Founder and Protector. He's the grandson of the Might-wielder, the fifth son of His Majesty, Duke of Lastings, His Highness Prince Edessak Augustus."

So it's the third prince, the second youngest prince, but he should be around 21 to 22 years old… Klein recalled what he had seen in the occasional descriptions in the newspapers and magazines at the Quelaag Club.

The horse carriage passed through one street after another, going from an artificial lake to the northwest. After more than an hour, they finally arrived at an extremely large manor.

At the entrance to the manor, Klein was inspected by two soldiers in red military uniforms and white trousers. He didn't hide the existence of his gun holster and revolver.

He believed that there were definitely people around Prince Edessak who could tell that he was carrying a gun, and that it easily made things worse if

he fooled them with illusions.

In any case, the prince knows that I'm a private detective, so his subordinates definitely wouldn't send guests to the police station just because I was illegally in possession of a gun… Klein watched as the soldier took the gun holster and revolver before he was informed to take it when he came out.

After two more inspections, Klein followed the old butler, went around the main house, and came to a wide area with hills and flowing waters.

The only drawback of this place was that the vegetation had long since withered away in the dead of winter, leaving nothing but desolation.

Tap. Tap. Tap. Several horses came running from the distance and stopped in front of them.

A young man in white trousers, high-heeled black boots, a fitted shirt, and a dark rider's tunic nimbly dismounted and walked over. Everyone else followed closely by his side.

He removed his helmet from his head and smiled at Klein.

"I'm finally meeting you, Detective Moriarty."

Upon seeing this, Klein's eyes lit up. It wasn't because of how handsome he was, but because he looked like the Henry Augustus I imprinted on five-pound notes.

Edessak Augustus also had a rotund face and a pair of slender eyes, but he didn't look serious at all. Instead, he always had a smile on his face, looking young and spirited.

"I didn't know that you, Your Highness, were the one who entrusted me with the task." Klein bowed.

Holding a horsewhip in his hand, Edessak weighed it in his palm and chuckled.

"I heard that you played an important role in the serial killer and Desire Apostle cases. Talim's recommendation was indeed good. Sigh, who knew that he would be gone days after I was horse racing with him. He has gone to the kingdom of storm and lightning."

Since the founding of the kingdom, the Augustus family had always believed in the Lord of the Storms.

Without waiting for Klein to answer, he said with a heavy expression, "The investigation into Talim's death didn't go through me, Mr. Moriarty. I want you to help me discover the truth."

*The conclusion given by the rest of the royal family? Your two elder brothers? This sudden level of in-fighting isn't something I can handle… Also, Your Highness, your style is really direct… *Klein sighed.

"I'm sorry, but I'd still say that Talim died of a sudden heart disease."

"Is that so? News came from the Mandated Punishers that a detective by the name of Sherlock Moriarty had testified that Talim had signs of suffering from a curse." Prince Edessak chuckled.

Klein could only respond with a wry smile, "Your Highness, you should know the principles I adhere to, I still wish to live another fifty years."

"Wasn't Talim your friend?" Prince Edessak asked.

Klein was at a loss for an answer when a maid suddenly came from the main room, quickly approached the prince, and whispered a few words.

Edessak's face stiffened.

"Tell her that she's not to go out!"

After he finished speaking, he took two steps forward. His serious expression softened, and a hint of softness and helplessness appeared in his blue eyes.

"But I will permit her to leave the room and walk around freely in the manor."

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CHAPTER 439
THE GENEROUS PRINCE

The scene before his eyes reminded Klein of the romance story which Talim Dumont had told him.

His noble friend had fallen in love with a commoner woman and was insistent on marrying her. However, being in the top circle of the aristocracy, the marriage was absolutely prohibited. Talim had been vexed over this matter, and he had even considered the prospect of hiring a murderer, but in the end, he managed to persuade the woman to leave his friend on her own accord.

Could the main character of this story be Edessak Augustus? The situation is very consistent in all aspects. As a prince, marrying a commoner is practically treason in this era. Since the founding of Loen, the spouse of a direct descendant of the Augustus Family could only be a noblewoman… From what I've just heard, Edessak has brought that commoner woman back? And he has even grounded her as punishment? True love… In a split-second, the story of a tyrannical prince and a pitiful frail white flower took shape in Klein's mind.

He looked into the distance, enjoying the midwinter scenery.

"That's not what it really looks like. When spring comes and the grass sprouts, you'll see a golf course of the highest quality." Prince Edessak dismissed the maid, raised his whip, and pointed around.

"Golf?" Klein asked, simultaneously knowing the answer to his question.

Prince Edessak motioned his guards and attendants away, leaving the old butler and Klein to follow him by his side.

He strolled on the desolate plains, chuckled, and said, "Yes, golf. This is a truly aristocratic sport that even the owners of most magazines and newspapers have a hard time getting involved in.

"Although I don't like Roselle, I have to admit that the fantasy-like ideas he had have given us a world with plenty of fun. If you can figure out the truth to Talim's death, this place will always be open to you."

It was indeed Roselle… Klein let out a light breath.

Seeing that he didn't respond, Prince Edessak continued to lament.

"There is much to learn from Roselle in every way, but his attitude towards feelings makes me sick. Of course, this is the common nature and style of most of the Intis aristocrats, and it's also the source of their infatuation with luxury and debauchery in their lives."

Looking ahead at the slow stream, Edessak said in a mature tone that was beyond his years, "Ninety-nine percent of people are not geniuses like Roselle. In order to succeed and establish a great enterprise, one must first understand what they really want, and for that, they must be willing to pay the price and never turn back while persisting all the way."

As he said this, his tone became slow as he laughed at himself and said, "Before this year, I had always thought that I liked the daughter of Earl Hall very much. She has perfect looks, an elegant demeanor, a rich fortune, a distinguished family, and a very powerful father. She's someone that no prince can find fault with, but now I understand that what I'm really attracted to is something that I yearn to have even in my dreams; it's a unique temperament and profound soul born from experience. Heh, I'm not saying that Miss Hall is lacking in temperament, but that wasn't what I want, admire, or like."

*Your Highness, your tone, attitude, and expression are now almost identical to Talim just before he died… Don't suddenly die in front of me. Even if I were to jump into the Tussock 1 River, there's no way for me to prove my innocence… Moreover, hearing much of this makes it easier for me to be silenced. Do you want to tie me to your chariot… *Klein felt a little afraid for some baffling reason.

He cleared his throat and took the initiative to change the subject.

"Your Highness, with your status and identity, you will certainly not lack subordinates. There are many people who are willing to investigate Talim's death for you, so why do you need me?"

Edessak shook his head and chuckled.

"As a prince, I have as much power as the little freedom I have. There are many things I can't let the people around me do, as there are too many eyes on me.

"You're a great detective with brains, and you have a good relationship with Talim. You were there at the time, so I don't think there's anyone better suited than you.

"Don't worry, if there really is a problem, then I can definitely guarantee your safety."

Such a promise is like toilet paper in the bathroom.… Klein couldn't help but silently lampoon.

With Prince Edessak already saying this much, he felt that there was little chance of him leaving Red Rose Manor if he refused again. He could only sigh and say, "Actually, I'm as angry as you are about Talim's death, but reality has kept me calm."

Edessak smiled.

"What can I do for you?"

"Talim's hair, either his flesh and blood, plus something he carried around with him." Klein made the request.

"Okay, then I'll have these delivered to your house." Edessak agreed at once, and then asked curiously, "That's all?"

Klein didn't stand on ceremony.

"I will only know what kind of help I need when I have a preliminary lead. Your Highness, it's best that you give me a way to communicate with you. A private detective who frequently visits this manor would definitely arouse suspicion."

Edessak nodded and said as if he was prepared, "I'll have someone secretly rent the house next door to you, 13 Minsk Street. When you need to make contact, write a letter to your neighbor about visiting and put it in the mailbox. As for the reward, you should know that I'm not a stingy person, even if it ends in failure. As long as you contribute and take the risk, you will still receive the corresponding income. If you do find out the truth, I'll give you a reward sufficient for your retirement."

This prince does things really swiftly and decisively… Retirement, that would be at least 3,000 pounds… Klein secretly sighed.

"Alright, may the spirit of Talim be at peace in the kingdom of storm and lightning." He bowed.

Edessak nodded slightly and instructed his elderly butler, "Take Detective Moriarty out and back to Minsk Street."

Why don't you keep me for lunch? Aren't you treating your guest in a little too arrogant a manner? Of course, it probably has to do with it being a long time before noon… Klein silently teased him.

He followed the old butler all the way out to the entrance of the manor and retrieved the gun holster, revolver, and the bullets.

…

At 15 Minsk Street, Klein stood at the oriel window and watched the carriage with the royal coat of arms drive away.

*Sherlock Moriarty might die at any moment if the investigations really goes deeper… Who knows, someone might be watching me right now… Hmm, not for now, since I haven't made any moves yet… *Klein frowned and stood still.

At this moment, he was extremely eager to advance to Faceless.

I can't afford to wait for the Machinery Hivemind's exploration of the Amon family's tomb. I have to continue trying to buy the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic via other channels. After all, no one knows how long the Machinery Hivemind's preparations will take. What if it exceeds a month or even half a year? That's not impossible. They can first send people to guard the entrance and slowly gather the corresponding information so as to be certain that nothing goes wrong. It's not a bad strategy, but that's not something that I can afford to wait for… As thoughts raced through Klein's mind, he made his decision.

At 2:45 p.m., he brought his newspaper into the bathroom and actively prepared for this week's Tarot Gathering.

Three o'clock sharp.

A deep red illusory radiance rose as Audrey Hall looked around in a good mood.

Last night, she had finally received the Sequence 7 Psychiatrist potion formula she had been dreaming of. Her emotions were still a mix of excitement, agitation, and serenity. Furthermore, the Psychology Alchemists

hadn't immediately asked her to make any contributions, claiming that it was an advance.

They had full confidence in Miss Audrey's outstanding ability to "repay" them.

No new members… Audrey stood up and gazed at the very end of the long bronze table. She raised the corners of her skirt and bowed.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fool~ Good afternoon…"

Her light and cheerful voice broke the unchanging silence above the fog, and it allowed Klein, who had been feeling a little depressed, to temporarily be rid of the troubles that the outside world had on him.

He nodded slightly and responded to the members' greetings.

When she sat down again, Audrey brought the other members into view and created a dynamic scene with the previous observations.

When bowing, Mr. Hanged Man silently sized up Mr. Fool with inconspicuous curiosity. Then, he looked towards Mr. World in anticipation… In other words, with him having a deep relationship with the Church of the Lord of Storms, he knows about the details of Duke Negan's assassination and is aware of the appearance of Hero Bandit Dark Emperor. He has the desire to investigate the hidden truth behind this matter… There appears to be an outcome regarding the Werewolf Beyonder characteristic which Mr. World had entrusted him to sell, and he has also probably found the Human-skinned Shadow characteristics or the Deep-sea Naga's hair…

The Sun's emotions are very stable and relaxed. This means that he believes that the City of Silver's surveillance on him has been lifted… What did he rely on to make this judgment? Has he been reallocated to the so-called exploratory teams?

Fors is a little depressed despite feeling relaxed… She passed the Abraham family member's test and has become his student, but she was forced to accept something that was disadvantageous to her?

Mr. World is as cold and deep as ever… Perhaps when I reach Sequence 7 or 6, I'll be able to grasp his emotional changes and thoughts…

Well, The Fool is still as mysterious, powerful, and unfathomable.

A series of thoughts flashed through Audrey's mind. She looked at the figure shrouded in the gray fog and said, "Honorable Mr. Fool, I have obtained three new pages of Roselle's diary."

It was a copy she had requested from the Psychology Alchemists. However, as she had only mentioned it last night, Escalante only had the time to give her three pages in such short notice.

"What kind of reward do you want?" Klein asked with a smile.

Audrey replied sincerely, "Can you just treat it as the reward for answering my previous question?"

As she said this, she had an inexplicable feeling of flaunting herself.

Mr. Hanged Man and the rest of you still don't know the existence of the Twilight Hermit Order!

Phew, how envious. I wonder what problem did Miss Justice seek guidance for in private… I'll write to Teacher when I get back, and I'll ask him if he has Roselle's diary, no—to the outside world, notebook. Fors immediately had the desire and motivation.

Under The Hanged Man's suspicious gaze, Klein nodded without any care.

"Sure."

Audrey quickly produced three pages of tawny diary entries and passed them on to Mr. Fool.

Klein took them and read them. On the first page, it wrote: "13th January, contact with Mr. Door stabilized."

Footnotes:

Ch 439 Footnote 1

This is a Chinese proverb, which involves jumping into the Yellow River.

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CHAPTER 440
ANGEL FAMILY

Just as Klein picked up the diary, Audrey added, "Mr. Fool, I still have ten diary pages which will be given to you later. It is for the payment for your previous blessing."

She repeated her private promise so as to not let Mr. Fool think that she had forgotten about it, and the reason why she had provided payment for the information regarding the Twilight Hermit Order was to first settle the "debt" while having the intention to show off a little.

The payment for the blessing… Fors ruminated over these words and suddenly realized an important oversight on her part.

On the matter regarding the Abraham family, Mr. Fool had sent his angel to help me interfere with the divination! I should've paid an appropriate amount… Oh no, I didn't realize this at all… I thought, like all rituals, that it was the end to it once it was completed… For a moment, Fors fell into a panic.

During ordinary ritualistic magic, if one prayed for help from a deity or a corresponding existence, they would perform a sacrifice in advance. Burning essential oils, extracts, and herbal essence that pleased the target was equivalent to making an advanced payment, but in the rituals corresponding to The Fool, there were many steps that could be omitted, and the price could only be paid afterward. Sometimes, there wasn't even a need to offer anything. Fors, who was accustomed to the former, ended up only saying a word of thanks.

She hurriedly looked towards the end of the long bronze table and earnestly said, "Honorable Mr. Fool, your divination interference had helped me greatly. I will try to find ten Roselle diary pages as soon as possible as well."

Seeing the performance of Miss Justice and Miss Magician, it dawned on Derrick Berg that he had found a way to fully express his gratitude.

However, the City of Silver doesn't have the diary pages of the so-called Emperor Roselle… Well, Mr. Fool is very interested in history, so I'll have to read more books and records on these… With a thought, Derrick made a promise to Mr. Fool who sat high above them.

The Hanged Man watched all this from the side and had no doubt that The Fool had an angel at his service.

Any organization should have a character like Miss Justice… The power of a role model is limitless… With a lot of "debts" to collect appearing out of thin air, Klein happily sighed inwardly.

As the high and mighty Mr. Fool, he always found it awkward to directly ask for compensation, and he had always believed that helping the members of his own organization was a normal and reasonable thing to do, without the need for him to make it so reliant on transactions. Thus, he didn't control The World to put on the appropriate performance to remind everyone.

Of course, if Justice and the others were willing to provide payment, then Klein had no intention of refusing it.

"Alright." He smiled and nodded before shifting his gaze back to the diary in his hands.

"13th January, contact with Mr. Door stabilized.

"The powerful Beyonder, who's lost in the darkness and trapped in the storm, didn't rush me to complete a complicated and difficult ritual so as to help him return to the real world.

"He seems to have understood that he has to come up with something that would move me, instead of giving me three intangible wishes, in order for me to consider whether I should take the hidden risks of saving him.

"Mr. Door temporarily didn't mention this matter and instead, with great interest, chatted about my tarot card creation. Heh heh. The word 'creation' should be written with quotation marks. From this point, it's apparent that Mr. Door is able to make contact with the real world at particular times and through particular methods, and he should be able to observe a lot of details.

"While talking about 'The Moon' card, I thought of a matter Zaratul mentioned. He said that the Life School of Thought worships the moon, but not the Evernight Goddess. Yes, I added the second half myself!

"Hence, I asked the Fourth Epoch expert, Mr. Door, about this question. He chuckled and similarly didn't give a direct answer. However, compared to the furtive Seer who speaks half-truths, making me want to beat him up, he's a lot more frank.

"He told me that if he were to choose a card from the tarot cards to represent the Evernight Goddess, he wouldn't choose The Moon, but—

"The Star!

"That makes things very interesting. I pressed, 'Who is the real owner of The Moon? His reply was even more worthy of relish.

"He said with a laugh that The Moon currently has no owner.

"If I didn't misunderstand him, then he means that the peak of The Moon's pathway is empty. The Sequence 0 is empty!"

That's not right. Isn't there a Primordial Moon? Upon seeing this, Klein suddenly had this thought.

He had already anticipated that the "The Moon" card didn't represent the Goddess. Whether it was the faith of the Life School of Thought, the attitude of the vampires, or the records in the Book of Secrets, they all vaguely pointed out that Evernight wasn't the Moon.

In contrast, Vampire Ancestor Lilith and the Primordial Moon resembled the Sequence 0 of this pathway in more ways.

According to the City of Silver's history lessons, Lilith had most likely fallen in the Dark Epoch, the Second Epoch. However, the Primordial Moon was an existence that people still believed in and sent responses to even to this day. Of course, those who prayed to "Her" wouldn't end up well… Why did Mr. Door say that The Moon had no owner at the moment? As seen from the Book of Secrets, the Primordial Moon still existed during the Fourth Epoch… Klein almost frowned.

Soon, he came up with three guesses. *First, Mr. Door didn't know enough about the hidden Primordial Moon, but that was a very low possibility; second, that the Primordial Moon was actually the disguise of another deity, not essentially occupying the position of The Moon's Sequence 0 pathway; third, that "She" was a Sequence 1 of The Moon's pathway or was in disguise and had the corresponding Sealed Artifact.*

And one more possibility, it's the response from The Moon pathway's "Uniqueness." Klein muttered silently.

The most important Beyonder ingredient in the Sequence 0 potion formula described by the Dark Emperor card wasn't all of the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristics, but something called Uniqueness. Different pathways had different Uniquenesses.

A true god was unique!

Other than the first guess, the other possibilities aren't small… What is the Beyonder pathway of The Moon? Klein turned to the second page of the diary and was lucky enough to discover that it was connected to the previous page.

"I continued pressing, but Mr. Door refused to say more. Heh, he thinks that I'll rescue him by whetting my appetite? Dream on!

"I hid my curiosity and scoffed at Mr. Door for not being respectful enough to true gods. He casually, yes—casually replied to me. *This is the attitude a Fourth Epoch noble has to the deities.*

"This guy is too good at acting! However, I really am interested in the nobility of the Fourth Epoch, so I took the opportunity to ask.

"Mr. Door told me that in the Tudor Dynasty, there were five noble families —Abraham, Antigonus, Amon, Tamara, and Jacob. Each family was known as an Angel Family, and they possessed tremendously terrifying strength.

"Angel Family, just the name itself raises many problems. It really makes one yearn for it! Mr. Door said that the number of Angel Families in the Fourth Epoch exceeded the five. There were the Zaratul and Zoroast family, which had always been loyal to the Solomon Empire; the Augustus, Sauron, Einhorn, Castiya families of the Trunsoest Dynasty; and the furtive Andariel and Beria families; as well as the Demoness family which stemmed from a true goddess which was one step up from the Angel Families.

"So the last winner of the Fourth Epoch was the Trunsoest Dynasty, but where did their royal family go? The four Angel Families—Augustus, Sauron, and the others—divided up the Northern Continent.

"Just as Mr. Door said the previous time, the strongest powerhouses in the Fourth Epoch far exceeds my imagination. However, most of them have been buried in the ashes of history. Even the Sauron family has waned, destroyed by me. In another one to two millennia, perhaps the Augustus

family might no longer exist. Only the true gods appear capable of forever illuminating the real world.

"Although some deities perished in the Fourth Epoch, they should only be few in number. This makes me think of something, something that was previously written in a web novel which I memorized. It can be used here with some changes:

"Ashes await those who fail to become true gods!

"After the communication period ended, Mr. Door disconnected. He's like a prisoner who's released on parole for a fixed period of time. And he does know a lot. When he mentioned the Zaratul family, there was faint contempt in his tone.

"Perhaps I need to maintain my relationship with Mr. Door. Apart from the Church of the God of Steam, Zaratul, and that secret and ancient organization, I should leave another outlet.

"Unlike the saying, a wily hare has far more than three holes!"

When Emperor Roselle was struggling in the end, he was only thinking about the organization that's suspected to be the Twilight Hermit Order. He didn't mention Mr. Door at all. Something apparently happened in between… So the ancestor of the Loen royal family, the Augustus family was actually so rich and powerful to be an Angel Family. However, why did the royal family of the Trunsoest Dynasty, to which they were loyal to, "disappear" just like that… Klein suddenly thought of a few things, and his desire to clear away the fog that shrouded the history of the Fourth Epoch and see its true appearance grew.

This was also the greatest hobby of his body's original owner.

Perhaps, that underground relic with two side-by-side seats and a terrifying evil spirit will help me answer a lot of questions… Klein lowered his gaze and flipped to the third page.

"2nd June, Bernadette massaged my back!

"It's good to have a daughter. She knows to care for her old father, and although I can see what she wants at a glance, at least she's willing to put on an act. Besides, she did a good job.

"I asked her which Beyonder pathway she wanted. She said she was undecided, but she liked the maxim of 'do as you wish, but do no harm.'

"3rd June. I saw Floren again. He's very different from before, as though he's a different person. No, he still had his original memories and some of his distinctive characteristics, which is enough to prove that he's him.

"What exactly happened to him to experience such a huge change?

"Perhaps a metaphor could be used to describe it more precisely. Some monsters are physical sutures, while he is a monster of mental sutures."

"5th June. I obtained an ancient book. It actually mentions the Primordial Demoness's name, not one of an honorific name!

"'Her' name is Cheek, but that's a man's name.

"Is this ancient book fake?"

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CHAPTER 441 "CHANNELS" INCREASE

Cheek? Was the Primordial Demoness also a man in the past? Klein almost raised his hand to his chin.

He had once guessed that it was because of the existence of the evil goddess, the Primordial Demoness, that led to the Assassin pathway having members of the opposite sex turn into a female after Sequence 7. Who knew that Roselle's diary would indicate that the Primordial Demoness might've been a male in the beginning as well?

This depicted two problems. First, the Primordial Demoness wasn't a naturally born deity, and they had only relied on potions to reach Sequence 0. Second, the purely feminine changes in this pathway were inherent in its Beyonder characteristics.

*Roselle had once speculated about the truth behind the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation. He suspected that all Beyonder characteristics originated from the original Creator, so there's no increase, and that the total amount is conserved… Assuming that this is true, does this mean that the Creator who created everything is all-inclusive, masculinity, femininity, and gender-neutral all in one… And the Demoness pathway is a representation of pure femininity? Of course, that ancient book might actually be fake… There's a lot of information in Roselle's diary entries today… *With thoughts flashing through his mind, Klein let the diary disappear in his hands.

"You can begin," he smiled and said to Justice, The Sun, and the others.

Alger looked towards The World immediately.

"Your Werewolf characteristic has been sold. An Artisan paid 1200 pounds for it. According to our agreement, I will receive 200 pounds.

"Also, I found clues to the hair of a Deep-sea Naga. 100 pounds a strand, and you want five of them in total. If you're fine with this deal, then I will complete it as soon as possible."

Klein had promised a higher share of the Werewolf's Beyonder characteristic because he knew that The Hanged Man had spent more effort and taken on a risk that far exceeded what Vampire Emlyn White had spent.

At this point, he thought for a moment and controlled The World to reply.

"No problem. Give me the five strands of Deep-sea Naga hairs and 500 pounds in cash as soon as possible."

Now, only the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic remains, and the amount of money I have has increased to 1,235 pounds, which isn't enough. If I don't want to wait for the Machinery Hivemind's exploration of the Amon family's mausoleum. I'd have to wait to receive another 500 to 1,000 pounds before I can buy it immediately when I see it… Klein subconsciously wondered what other items or knowledge he could use to exchange for money.

Of course, this was on the premise that the target of these transactions was able to pay the remuneration, in cash.

Hearing this, Audrey raised her hand very slightly, and without hiding anything, she said, "I'd like to purchase three ingredients: a pair of eyes from a Mirror Dragon, 50 milliliters of its blood, as well as a fruit from the Tree of Elders."

Miss Justice has gotten the formula for the Psychiatrist potion… Klein made this judgment in an instant, and The Hanged Man came to a similar

conclusion.

“…I will write to my teacher and ask him if he has one of these ingredients." Fors thought for a moment.

Derrick nodded and said, "I'll also take note. Corroded Mirror Dragons aren't rare, same for the Tree of Elders. Uh, in the City of Silver, there's also the Beyonder characteristic left behind by a Psyche Analyst; however, it's hard to make transactions for them, and it's easy to be suspected.

Psyche Analyst was the ancient name of Psychiatrist.

When their conversation reached Klein's ears, he immediately manipulated The World and made the dummy hoarsely and gloomily say, "I'll ask around in my circle. Oh right, continue helping me find the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic."

"Alright." Audrey confidently turned her head to face the person opposite her. "Mr. Hanged Man, I'll also look out for the Wind-blessed potion formula you need."

She had already joined the Psychology Alchemists and had a secret organization backing her. With them, many ingredients were no longer in short supply. She could obtain them as long as she paid the necessary price.

Fors repeated, "I'll write to my teacher and ask."

Upon seeing this development, Klein felt rather gratified. After a long period of hard work, the Tarot Club had finally developed two major channels, the Psychology Alchemists and the Abraham family. Many things would become simple.

The World chuckled and said, "Your answers fill me with hope, but you must also take care to protect yourselves, and proceed in a way that would avoid arousing suspicion as much as possible."

"Mr. World, you rarely talk so much." Audrey smiled in reply.

…I got a little too pleased and momentarily forgot The World's original character profile… Klein immediately remedied the situation and made The World chuckle and say,

"All of you have become sufficiently valuable. I hope that this kind of transaction can last for a very, very long time. That's why I'm reminding you."

"Thank you," Audrey gracefully expressed her gratitude.

At that moment, Derrick hesitated and said, "I'll give it a try as well. I've recently completed several patrol missions, but there's nothing out of the ordinary."

Very good… Klein said to himself, making The World shut his mouth.

After a brief moment of silence, Alger looked thoughtfully at Miss Justice.

"I would like to know the details of the assassination of Duke Negan. What kind of reward do you need?"

Why ask me? As someone close to the Church of the Lord of Storms, shouldn't you already know the full details of this case? Audrey was surprised for a moment, but then she understood the meaning of Mr. Hanged Man's words.

He wants to ask about the organization or force that instigated the Desire Apostle, but he doesn't think it's right to ask The Fool directly, thinking that it would be too sudden and invasive. So he took a roundabout way by asking me to open up the topic, gently shifting the focus to the things he wants to know… He knows that I'm a noble lady and that I should pay attention to the assassination of Duke Negan. So he's not worried that I won't answer him… Mr. Hanged Man is really experienced… Audrey said, with the corners of her mouth curling up slightly, "No, there's no need for

compensation. Isn't it the purpose of our Tarot Club to freely exchange common knowledge amongst each other regarding their respective regions?"

Only by doing so can our Tarot Club expand at a rapid pace! she thought to herself, quite possessively.

"Your words shame me." Alger was stunned for a moment before he pressed his hand to his chest and leaned forward a little.

"…”

Klein, who was shrouded in the thick gray fog, inwardly laughed dryly.

Audrey lightly pursed her lips, weighed her words, and said, "The Desire Apostle used a unique situation to complete the assassination of Duke Negan; by using his ability to trigger intense emotions and desires, and at the cost of serious injuries, he successfully broke out of the encirclement, entering the sewers.

"When the Nighthawks caught up to him, he was already dead. The Hero Bandit Dark Emperor was present. This gentleman didn't do it to silence him, but to target the organization that entrusted the assassination contract to the Desire Apostle.

Which organization? Just as The Hanged Man was wondering to himself in puzzlement, The Fool, who was sitting at the end of the table, silently praised Miss Justice and looked at her. He then gave her a reminder in passing, "In the outside world, do not mention the name of the organization or write it down."

"Why?" Audrey blurted out in astonishment.

Klein leaned back in his chair and replied in a gentle voice, "Any mention of it will be known."

Any mention of it will be known… Audrey subconsciously looked at Mr. Fool, only to feel that he seemed to be emphasizing something with his eyes hidden in the fog.

Mr. Fool is implying that if it's not in "His" kingdom or through talking to "Him," mentioning or writing down the name of the Twilight Hermit Order would allow them to sense it via some means or item… That should be what he means… What an extremely secretive and high-level organization! To a certain extent, it's even more terrifying than the Church of the seven deities… And Mr. Fool, our Tarot Club is looking for them… Audrey instantly felt like she understood a lot of things. She straightened her back and said, "As you command."

Any mention of it will be known… A secret organization whose name can't even be mentioned? A powerful organization that I don't know of at all? Is this the faction behind the Desire Apostle? Mr. Fool had sent his adorer to search for them? This high-level situation in the world really is more complicated than I thought. There are even more secrets that I have no way of knowing… Alger slightly nodded his head, feeling both shocked and agitated at the same time.

At this moment, he had the urge to pay Mr. Fool for the name of the organization.

However, after thinking about it carefully, he felt that there was no need for that. Although understanding the situation involving the higher-level entities would help him perfect his plans for the future and play an important role in certain situations, he, who was currently at the bottom of the Mid-Sequence levels, had no way of making contact with matters related to the mysterious organization. What he needed the most right now was the formula and ingredients for Wind-blessed, so he had to save up enough wealth for them.

After succeeding my advancement, I could seek an opportunity to consult Mr. Fool… Alger made a note of this.

Fors was confused by what she heard. Things like the Desire Apostle and the organization in which "any mention of it will be known" were completely different from what she had read in the newspapers.

There are indeed many secrets behind the assassination of a duke… It's a pity that the organization's name cannot be written down. Otherwise, I can use it as the villain of a future novel; it will definitely be a classic… I still owe ten diary pages and haven't bought the Spirit Eater's stomach pouch. There's no need to spend the money in order to understand such high-end matters for the time being… Well, the secrecy and knowledge circulating in the Tarot Club are ten times greater than Mr. A's gathering, or more! Fors restrained her curiosity as a writer.

As for Derrick, he didn't know who Duke Negan was, so he didn't care who was behind the assassination.

He sat silently and was reserved, as though he were in class.

When the matter regarding the Twilight Hermit Order was over, Fors looked around and probingly asked, "Lady and gentlemen, do you have a way to solve the problem of accumulating too many Beyonder characteristics of the same level?"

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CHAPTER 442
EXPLORATION MISSION

Alger looked at Fors and returned with a question.

"You were forced to drink a second Apprentice potion?"

Why did you figure it out so easily… It's as though you were there to see it… Fors uncomfortably cleared her throat and said, "Yes, let's just pretend that's what happened…

"What solutions do you have? What do you need me to exchange for it?"

Alger glanced at Mr. Fool, but seeing that he had nothing to say, he replied in a calm and low voice, "You don't need payment, because it will certainly not be able to satisfy your needs."

Without waiting for Miss Magician and Miss Justice to ask, he casually explained, "High-Sequence Beyonders can independently decide whether or not to pass on their Beyonder characteristics to their descendants, and how much they will inherit as a result. Sequence 6 and Sequence 5 will naturally pass a part of it in an uncontrollable manner. Although the quantity isn't a lot each time and wouldn't affect the Beyonder's strength, their Sequence will regress if they have enough children."

"Such a child is born with high spiritual perception and a certain level of incomplete Beyonder powers?" Audrey suddenly came to a realization, understanding the origins of some special people.

The Hanged Man nodded.

"Yes, they're equivalent to half a Sequence 9, with a certain amount of characteristics. If they want to become a Beyonder, they can only choose the corresponding path. Of course, such people might not be a result of inheritance. It might be the result of them gaining the blessings of a deity or the corruption of an evil spirit. There are many factors that can cause the same degree of influence. Also, when High-Sequence Beyonders have children, they might give birth to someone who's already at Sequence 5. This is one of the rare instances when one can advance without losing control.

So that's how it is… Audrey sighed with satisfaction.

To her, knowing more mysteries was more enjoyable than getting a nice dress or jewelry.

Fors also came to a realization as she pressed, "Then what about Beyonders at Sequence 7, 8, and 9?"

"Theoretically speaking, their Beyonder characteristics will not be passed down to their descendants, but that is not absolute. If there's an excessive amount of Beyonder characteristics, there's a chance for them to be passed down as well. That is to say, if you're pregnant with a child, there's a way to effectively reduce the remnant potion in your body. No, one might not succeed, but three or four will stand a higher chance."

Three or four? Fors stared agape.

Klein, who had learned all of this general knowledge from Roselle's diary, couldn't help but think of a joke.

Miss Magician, in the future, you can say to your child that "you were a free gift 1 from drinking a potion!"

Although it seems that, according to Mr. Hanged Man, the burden can be reduced the moment a child is conceived, having a child would still require almost forty weeks of trouble. No, more than that, it's impossible to leave

the child after it's born, right… After grasping the acting method, even if the process subsequently becomes more difficult, two months will definitely be enough time to digest it. It might not even take that long; after all, it's just a starting Sequence… Fors forced a smile and said, "I understand, the best way is still to rely on acting to digest it."

Alger gave an affirmative answer. "That's the case for Sequence 7 and below."

After that, digestion would easily take a year or so, two to three years, and then five to six years. When that happens, giving birth to a child would be a simpler plan… he added inwardly.

There were a few seconds of silence as the two women digested the knowledge they had just gained.

This was the first time they had known that having a child had such uses.

For Derrick, this was common knowledge. He adjusted his posture and said, "I've been assigned another exploration mission."

"Where to?" Alger tilted his head and asked.

"It's still the half-destroyed temple of the Fallen Creator," Derrick answered without sounding too grave.

*It sounds like there's a certain guaranteed level of safety… *Audrey didn't interrupt.

The Hanged Man pondered for two seconds before asking, "Is the Shepherd Elder still in prison?"

"Yes. This exploration will be led by the Chief." The Sun didn't hide the facts.

"This way, the danger level will be much lower than last time. You can give it a try." Alger couldn't help but look at Mr. Fool once more.

Unable to read any thoughts from the other party's blurry eyes, he continued to speak to The Sun.

"This should be your last inspection before the surveillance is completely removed.

"Previously, the information you made known was that Amon is archenemies with the Fallen Creator. They wouldn't mind exposing themselves to spoil the other's plans. This time, by heading to the Fallen Creator's temple for exploration, as long as you don't reveal any abnormalities, the six-member council will basically determine that you're no longer under Amon's influence."

Mr. Hanged Man sure is experienced. It's as if he was planning the operation… Derrick kept it in mind before asking, "What else do I need to pay attention to?"

At the very end of the long bronze table, The Fool, who was quietly watching, opened his mouth.

"Flesh and blood, ravings."

Klein had only said two words, leaving the Tarot Club members to comprehend them on their own.

This was the demeanor of a great figure.

The Hanged Man pondered for a few seconds, then he said to The Sun who had thanked The Fool, "In particular, don't look at what you shouldn't, don't listen to what you shouldn't, don't eat what you shouldn't, and don't touch what you shouldn't."

"What are those that shouldn't be seen or heard?" Derrick asked, puzzled.

The Hanged Man said with a deepened voice, "After entering the temple, everything is included."

"Then, how should I explore?" Derrick asked in surprise.

The Hanged Man chuckled.

"Aren't there other members? Isn't there a Chief?"

It really is Mr. Hanged Man's style… Audrey subconsciously wanted to cover her face with her hands, but the education and habits ingrained in her had told her that such actions weren't graceful, so she forcefully changed the way she moved, stroking her drooping hair and pushing it behind her ears.

"…" The Sun felt that such a method was quite unacceptable.

Upon noticing his reaction, Alger secretly cursed before saying, "What I mean is to listen to your Chief's instructions. Only do what he allows you to do. At any other times, do not take matters into your own hands."

"I understand. Thank you, Mr. Hanged Man." The Sun instantly relaxed.

Phew. Alger exhaled and turned to the woman opposite him.

"Miss Justice, I wish to know the political changes in Backlund after Duke Negan's passing."

Audrey recalled the information she had heard, both directly and indirectly in recent times.

"Duke Negan's death has divided the House of Lords. Although his eldest son is about to inherit the nobility title and become a member of the House of Lords, his prestige isn't enough to calm the dispute.

"Nearly ten members of the House of Lords have jointly proposed that the newly conferred nobility should also have a chance to obtain a fixed seat as a Member of Parliament.

"Simply put, let those who are conferred nobility through political donations, charity donations, and the purchase of land become members of the House of Lords."

Hearing this, The Hanged Man Alger laughed.

"Aren't nobles with a certain amount of history in their family line the ones who despise such people who rely on unorthodox means to be conferred a nobility title the most? Wasn't the ultimate honor and their greatest pride the fact that a fixed seat in the House of Lords was hereditary?"

Ignoring the inadvertent mockery, Audrey calmly explained, "When you have tens of thousands of pounds, hundreds of thousands of pounds, or even more debts, you will also make the same choice."

Owing money wasn't a fatal threat to many nobles, but the debtor could apply to the court and use their lands as payment for the debts. Without the minimum amount of land needed for a noble title, their status as nobles would be on the verge of collapse.

"And then?" Alger didn't continue to harp over the previous question.

Audrey gave a rough description. "This kind of dispute has put many bills on hold, including, but not limited to, the raising of worker salary, the improvement of working hours, and revising the Poor Law. It's gratifying to see that the Civil Servant Unified Examination is still progressing steadily and hasn't stopped, and the investigation into the air pollution in Backlund is also going in depth."

"There will be no war for the time being…" The Hanged Man whispered, and he went on to talk to the other members.

Worried that staying too long in the bathroom would arouse suspicion, Klein announced the end of the Tarot Gathering after they were done.

…

After returning to her room, Audrey didn't rush to get up. She first quietly sorted out the things she needed to do after this.

Looking at the mirror in front of her, she played with the accessories on her earlobes. With a slight smile, she silently muttered to herself, *There will be a psychology lesson tomorrow afternoon. I can tell Miss Escalante that I've met someone in a Beyonder circle who's looking to buy the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic and has promised an abnormally generous price for it. I wonder if the Psychology Alchemists will be interested in it or not…*

Also, I mustn't forget Roselle's diary and the Wind-blessed formula…

Yes, I have to find the Psychiatrist ingredients as quickly as possible. Audrey, you can't be lazy! Susie is already a Sequence 8, so you can't let her overtake you!

…

After pacing back and forth in the room, Fors finally made up her mind and pulled out her chair.

She grabbed a piece of paper and a pen and, after mulling over it for nearly a minute, began to write to Dorian Gray.

She described how she learned of someone who requested the characteristic of a Human-skinned Shadow and the Wind-blessed potion formula, as well as her curiosity over the Roselle notebook.

…

The capital of the Rorsted Archipelago, the City of Generosity.

Alger Wilson walked out of the hotel and headed for a secret underground market.

His target was the hair of a Deep-sea Naga.

He had no intention of missing a Human-skinned Shadow if someone had it.

…

I'm short on money… Klein sat in the living room and sighed again.

He still needed quite a bit of cash to ensure that he could purchase the items directly when he received clues regarding the Human-skinned Shadow's characteristics.

Klein thought for a long time, wondering if he should find other channels to sell the Beyonder characteristic left by the Interrogator and stop waiting for Miss Xio to save up her money.

After an unknown period of time, the sound of the doorbell rang, breaking the afternoon silence.

Footnotes:

Ch 442 Footnote 1

This is a meme in China. The gift can be quite a wide range of things, one of them being a gift from topping up a telephone SIM card.

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CHAPTER 443
A ONE-MAN PERFORMANCE

The visitor was a man in a dark green postman uniform. He smiled at Klein in a fawning manner.

"Are you Mr. Sherlock Moriarty?" he asked.

"Yes." Klein could vaguely guess the purpose of the other person's visit.

The visitor raised his right hand and handed over a palm-sized item that was wrapped in layers of black gauze.

"Please sign and accept your package."

Klein deliberately revealed his doubts.

"Shouldn't you give me a slip and let me go to the corresponding post office for collection?"

The Loen Kingdom's postal system was a perfect replica of the Intis system, and even the flaws were copied quite significantly. Anything that couldn't be stuffed directly into the mailbox, no matter what it was, would only be given a "collection slip" by the postman, making the recipient go through the hassle of collecting it himself.

“…Haha, because it's rather precious, so I have to personally deliver it to you," the postman said after a momentary shock.

It seems you're not professional enough to be a real postman… Without further questions, Klein accepted the package, pen, and slip before signing

them.

He closed the door and returned to the living room. He didn't rush to open the package, but he took out a gold coin and threw it into the air.

Pa!

Klein caught the gold coin and looked down to see if it was heads or tails.

A number faced up, indicating a negative response. *There's no latent danger… *Klein nodded slightly and put away the gold coin. He touched the paper figurine in his pocket and carefully opened the package.

After one layer after another of black gauze was removed, the objects inside clearly presented themselves to him. They were a pale gold-colored, elegantly patterned pocket watch; a handkerchief stained with dark red blood; seven or eight brown short curly hair tied together; and a stack of notes.

Talim's belongings, his hair, his blood, and his daily records, are all present… Prince Edessak sure is a very efficient man. It's not even nighttime… Klein looked at the items on the coffee table and suddenly felt that there were many people staring at him at that very moment.

An ancient Angel Family with a heritage of more than two thousand years would definitely have an unimaginable background. Being involved with the royal family's internal strife makes it possible for me to be pulverized at any moment and anywhere… Maybe I'm already being monitored now… I have to appear mediocre and useless enough, to ensure my safety… Klein had already decided what to do, so he took his time checking the pocket watch, handkerchief, and hair.

During this process, his spiritual intuition didn't give him any warnings, nor did it prevent him from attempting divination.

After having a better grasp on the situation, Klein took out the letter, picked up a pen, and wrote his divination sentence:

"The true cause of Talim Dumont's death."

He acted big-hearted and poised, as though he didn't feel that he was being monitored at that very moment.

Picking up the curly hair and handkerchief, Klein chanted the divination sentence while leaning back against the back of the sofa. His eyes turned deep as he entered Cogitation.

After repeating it seven times, he came to the dream world and saw the familiar lobby of the Quelaag Club.

And then he saw Talim Dumon clutch at his heart, his face contorted once again.

"This revelation shows that Talim did die of a sudden heart disease…" Klein opened his eyes and muttered softly to himself.

He frowned, wearing a puzzled, confused, and thoughtful expression.

He tried several different divination statements and received the same result.

He got up and paced back and forth several times.

He punched himself in the head, as though he was angry that he wasn't good enough to help his friend or find out who the culprit was.

In the end, he dejectedly sat down and didn't move for a long time. In the dark room, he was like the silhouette of a stone statue.

That should be enough. I can't go overboard… If there's no one monitoring me, then I would've been fighting with the air just now… Klein shook his

head in a self-deprecating manner, got up, and walked to the kitchen.

After dinner, he seemed to perk up again before he read the stack of notes carefully, including what Talim had done and who he had met on the day and the days prior to his death.

Home, Red Rose Manor, Quelaag Club, Viscount Conrad's mansion… There's nothing out of the ordinary about it… Klein picked up a sharpened pencil and drew circles, marking out the places he would visit and the targets he would ask about in the next few days.

After doing all of this, he let out a long sigh. Without confidence, he packed up his things, washed up, and went to bed.

In the middle of the night, when the red moon was hidden by layers of clouds, Klein suddenly opened his eyes and woke up.

He got out of bed, opened the door slowly, and went into the bathroom next door, hiding himself with a Paper Figurine Substitute in the process.

Walking four steps counterclockwise, he arrived above the gray fog and sat down at the seat which belonged to The Fool.

His eyes had become clear, no longer dispirited, dejected, and pessimistic.

Soon after, Klein took the blood-stained handkerchief from a hidden pocket in his pajamas made out of old clothes.

When he was packing his things, he had used his Beyonder powers as a Magician to hide the handkerchief on his body.

After taking a deep breath, Klein conjured a pen and paper, and he wrote down the divination sentence that was no different from the beginning:

"The true cause of Talim Dumont's death."

After he repeated it seven times with his body and mind in peace and quiet, he leaned back in his chair with the paper and handkerchief in his hand and fell asleep in the silent and empty old palace.

In a gray, separated, and illusory world, Klein saw a completely different scene from before.

Presented before his eyes was a palm-sized wooden puppet, carved with eyes, a nose, and a mouth.

There were a few drops of dark red blood on the puppet's body, giving it a demonic appearance.

A palm stretched out. The skin was white and exquisite, smooth, and beautiful, with five slender and delicate fingers that accentuated the hand's flesh and bones.

The most eye-catching thing was a unique ring with an inlaid sapphire on the hand's pinky finger.

Pa!

The hand's index finger was wreathed in black flames as it pointed at the heart of the wooden puppet.

Without a sound, the scene shattered and Klein woke up from his dream.

His initial judgment wasn't wrong. Talim had died under a curse!

But there was a problem. He had already seen the scene of the curse happening, so why wasn't the scene displayed in its entirety?

The mysterious space above the gray fog is able to get rid of all interference.… Klein was puzzled for a moment.

Normally speaking, receiving a revelation that too abstract and easy to misread was a problem with his limited divination abilities. It meant that the difficulty of the matter he was divining was too high and that it had nothing to do with the gray fog. It was an understandable outcome, but he had clearly seen the scene of the murderous curse, but he was limited to a small scope of the situation. It didn't provide a relatively effective revelation and was rather baffling.

Have I… encountered such a similar situation in the past? Klein dug through his past experiences.

Suddenly, he sat up straight, remembering a similar experience.

In Tingen, when he was divining the real reason behind the countless coincidences, something similar had happened!

He could clearly see the house with the red chimney, but he couldn't reach Ince Zangwill and Sealed Artifact 0-08!

Th-this is the power of someone or something that's at the level of a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact that's resisting the power of the gray fog? Klein's eyes abruptly narrowed.

No, not necessarily. There are still quite a few possibilities. I have to confirm it again! He put in a lot of effort in order to calm down.

As for the method used for confirming, it wasn't daunting for the experienced him. The method was simple—redoing the same divination again.

If the revelation doesn't change, it means that things aren't so terrible, and if divination is no longer successful, then something around the target or the target is resisting the gray fog to some extent, like 0-08!

Taking a deep breath, Klein calmly repeated the previous divination.

"The true cause of Talim Dumont's death."

…

He leaned back in his chair and chanted in a low voice, his eyes growing darker.

In the dream, all he could see was a hazy, shattered gray fog. There were no more wooden puppets or fingers.

Whoosh!

Klein straightened his back, his expression abnormally grave.

What did Talim get himself involved in? he frowned as he muttered to himself.

There's no question as to what I should do next. It's to be passive and perfunctory. I'll first lie to Prince Edessak before telling him that I'm incapable of figuring out the truth.

Phew, this world is really scary. Just the slightest bit of carelessness would cause me to come into contact with something extremely terrifying… Klein sighed. Without daring to stay any longer, he quickly returned to the bathroom in the real world.

…

Tuesday, 9 a.m. at the Crown Cemetery.

Klein stood at the edge of the crowd, wearing a black shirt, black vest, and a black tweed coat whilst he was carrying some fresh flowers he bought for 12 soli. He looked gravely at Talim Dumont's coffin being carried over, had his soul put to rest, and was buried bit by bit into the earth.

During this process, Talim's mother's eyes were red and swollen. She wanted to speak a few times, but she couldn't find her voice. His father's hair was gray, and his expression was haggard. He just stood there, trembling slightly.

When the scene reflected in his eyes, Klein tilted his head back and closed his eyes.

He waited until the mourners had left before he walked over, bent over, and placed the white flowers on top of the others.

*I'm sorry… *he silently said inwardly.

Standing up, he stepped aside and was about to leave when Klein noticed Reporter Mike and Surgeon Aaron, closing in.

"What a pity. I never thought that Talim would actually… actually… Sigh…” Mike's expression was pained as he couldn't finish his sentence.

Aaron, who was always cold, took off his glasses and wiped the corners of his eyes. He sighed and said, "He's a warmhearted guy. He shouldn't have ended up like this."

"Yes, he could've gotten rid of his grandfather's bad reputation," Klein echoed.

Just then, he saw a female figure in a thick black dress with a veil covering her face walk up to Talim's grave. She, too, was also carrying a bouquet of white flowers.

Klein looked away, not paying much attention, just keeping watch through the corner of his eye.

The woman bent down to release the flower, revealing her left palm, which was covered by a black gauze glove.

A blue gem faintly appeared on the pinky of her left palm.

Klein's scalp tingled instantly.

His entire body felt numb.

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CHAPTER 444
CONFESSION

A similar feeling that wasn't unfamiliar. The experienced Klein immediately used his Clown powers to control his facial expression and the slight trembling of his body.

Without rushing, he gently retracted his gaze, making the casual glance from before appear normal.

"Sigh, Talim was so young. He wasn't even married and has no children." Klein sighed as he went with the flow.

He had said this because it gave him a plausible explanation for his subtle reaction towards the woman who had offered the flowers—he had turned sad having seen a woman who had some connection with Talim, associated her to marriage and family, and then finally how his friend had passed away at an early age.

"Yeah, actually, at his age, he should've been married four or five years ago. Unfortunately, the matter with his grandfather left him with an extremely strong psychological trauma. He had always rejected marriage, and only recently did he improve." Reporter Mike sighed.

At this moment, the seemingly normal Klein seemed to have a cluster of thorns stabbing at his back, slowly piercing into his skin and flesh, causing him to feel extremely tense.

The girl in the black dress with the sapphire ring on her left hand pinky had straightened her body and calmly surveyed her surroundings. Afterward,

she quietly left Talim's grave with two maids accompanying her. She silently walked further and further away from Talim's grave.

Phew… Klein secretly heaved a sigh of relief.

The feeling of his back being stabbed quickly turned into a cold sweat.

Just who is she, and why did she come to the grave to offer flowers? Talim's lover? However, how could Talim, who had no wealth or status, have a relationship with a terrifying person who is involved with a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or that of a demigod? This isn't a novel! Furthermore, she should be the one that used a curse to kill Talim… This matter runs deep… Klein listened quietly as Mike and Aaron recounted Talim's past.

His thoughts quickly dispersed, feeling that the most puzzling thing about this matter was that Talim's death—an ordinary person who had no money, power, status, or strength—was actually involved with a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or a powerhouse of the same level. This was simply inconceivable!

*But this isn't an isolated case. There's another similar case that has happened around me… *Klein suddenly thought of something and looked at the surgeon, Aaron.

This ordinary person's home might very well be hiding a Sequence 1 Snake of Mercury!

Following this train of thought, Klein recalled the nearly five months that he had spent here since he transmigrated. He was stunned to discover that he had unconsciously become involved with many demigods and terrifying Sealed Artifacts.

The woman who had killed Talim; the Snake of Mercury, Will Auceptin; the Blasphemer Amon; the mysterious woman at the Royal Museum; a High-Sequence Beyonder of the Rose School of Thought; 0-08; 1-42; Ince Zangwill; the Mutated Sun Sacred Emblem; the Antigonus family's notebook; Mr. Azik Eggers, who's suspected to be a descendant of Death;

Mr. Door; the Twilight Hermit Order… Each name flashed through Klein's mind, and every single one of them made him feel like drawing in a cold breath.

He calmed his heart and carefully thought, *These don't include the True Creator and the Eternal Blazing Sun, who are ranked high above these… Strictly speaking, I can be considered to be among their ranks. After all, I came from a dark divination, and I'm a strange alternate world soul who controls the strange gray fog… Could this be another "crest of the times" after Roselle? So all the demigods and terrifying Sealed Artifacts are making an appearance in real life…*

As these thoughts flashed through Klein's mind, the grief-stricken Reporter Mike and Surgeon Aaron excused themselves. He then left the cemetery at a leisurely pace.

Just as he was looking around for a rental carriage, a familiar carriage drove out of a secluded spot and stopped in front of him.

Although the coat of arms on the black carriage was skillfully concealed, Klein was still able to recognize it as Prince Edessak's carriage.

Without a sound, the door of the carriage opened, and the old butler with his meticulously combed hair alighted. He politely made a gesture of invitation.

"His Highness is waiting for you."

"Alright." Klein didn't feel guilty at all as he entered the spacious and warm carriage.

Prince Edessak was dressed in a dark blue coat with a large collar and a golden ribbon across his chest, which made him look very abnormally noble.

He rubbed the diamond brooch, and his long and narrow eyes showed hints of a sigh.

"I'm restricted even when participating in the funeral of a friend. I couldn't appear in person and could only watch from afar, sending someone to offer flowers for me. This is the royal family's lack of freedom."

"If Talim's grandfather hadn't lost his aristocratic title, then you wouldn't have to avoid anything." Klein abided by Prince Edessak's gesture and sat across from him.

Edessak picked up a cup of blood-red wine and said, "Sigh, I had originally planned to find an opportunity to help Talim's father recover his aristocratic title, but unfortunately…"

Instead of going deep into the subject, he asked, "Sherlock, did you receive the package?"

"Yes," Klein answered any questions he was asked, never giving any additional descriptions.

Edessak nodded slightly.

"Any progress?"

"I made several divinations using Talim's hair, blood, and belongings, but all of them led to the conclusion that he had died of a sudden heart disease." Klein used his emotionless, smooth narration to imply that "my Sequence isn't high enough," "my standards are limited," "although I'm good at divination, the other party is stronger," and "I'm sure that I can't figure out the truth."

Edessak looked disappointed and sighed.

"How do you plan on continuing the investigation?"

"Starting with the people Talim came in contact with a few days before his death and the places he went," Klein replied according to the plan.

Edessak looked at the old butler.

"There will definitely be no lack of threatening interrogations or bribery. Hmm… Pay Sherlock 100 pounds for his investigation fees."

"Yes, Your Highness." The old butler took out a stack of bills that he had prepared earlier.

A hundred pounds straight out? Once again, Klein felt Prince Edessak's generosity.

"I'll do my best." He took the hundred pounds in cash and pocketed it without counting it in detail.

"I hope that we can put Talim to rest." Prince Edessak clenched his right fist and tapped the left side of his chest.

He turned his head to look out the window at Crown Cemetery which wasn't too far away.

His friendship for Talim still remains strong… Klein sighed before he was led out to a carriage by the old butler.

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Earl Hall.

Audrey looked at her psychology teacher, whose long hair reached her waist, and she pretended to carefully look from side to side.

She immediately lowered her voice and said, "Miss Escalante, I recently joined a new Beyonder gathering. There were high offers for a Human-skinned Shadow characteristic and the Wind-blessed potion formula. Uh, different people. These are likely Mid-Sequence items, right? It sounds quite interesting. Ah, right. Will the Psychology Alchemists be interested?"

Escalante was startled. She pondered for a few seconds and said, "I'll ask when I return."

"Alright," Audrey responded briskly, as though she were simply intrigued by such Mid-Sequence transactions.

Escalante retracted her attention and said in a serious tone, "Miss Audrey, although you are already a Sequence 8 Beyonder, you have yet to receive formal education in mysticism. You still don't understand enough about the techniques and applications of a Spectator and Telepathist, as well as the foundation theories. Starting today, I'll guide you to become a true Beyonder."

"That's what I wish," Audrey said sincerely.

The huge golden retriever, Susie, who was sitting by her feet, wagged its tail happily, as if happy for her mistress.

…

Having made up his mind not to work, Klein took the carriage back to 15 Minsk Street.

He opened the door and was just about to take off his hat when he froze.

His spiritual intuition told him that a stranger had entered the living room. Someone had entered his room!

This… He barely hid his tracks… Is it considered a warning? Having a warning is better than not having one… Klein stood in the hall for a long time in silence.

Immediately, he turned around and went to the Steam Cathedral in a rental carriage.

The cathedral towered over the chimneys and clock tower, the former representing the power of steam, while the latter represented the beauty of machinery through the hanging of its intricate clocks.

It was neither the weekend nor noon or the evening, so there were only a few devotees in the hall quietly praying.

Klein sat down in the aisle, leaned his cane, took off his hat, and pretended to pray for ten minutes in front of the Sacred Emblem.

Then, he picked up his things and walked along the aisle to the altar. He said to the bishop standing to the side, "I wish to make a confession."

"Good, God is watching you." The bishop, who had a kind face and hoary hair at his temples, walked to the confessional by his side.

Klein followed closely behind and closed the door.

He sat down on a chair and said to the bishop through the wooden board, "I confess that I didn't adhere to my principles when facing danger, and I chose to retreat."

"What were you thinking at the time?" the bishop gently asked.

Klein immediately described in detail about Talim's death; his suspicions; the reminder from the Machinery Hivemind; Prince Edessak's entrustment; and, after how he failed to obtain any answers from his divination, he expressed his heartfelt cowardice in the face of the royal family's strife.

The reason he didn't go straight to Carlson was that he was afraid that not only was he being watched, but Prince Edessak's men were also watching him from the shadows. Once he made his intentions clear, he couldn't be sure if he would encounter another calamity.

The Steam Cathedral was the headquarters of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery, and it was one of the three Great Holy Temples. No

one could spy on whatever happened inside.

What Klein intended to do was to use the Church of the God of Steam to convey his true thoughts and avoid getting caught up in a deeper conflict.

Simply put, it was to comply with what his heart wanted.

The bishop listened quietly and answered without changing his tone, "Your choice derives from human instinct; God will not blame you.

"Go back, God will protect you."

That's good… Klein understood the hint and quietly left the Steam Cathedral.

Standing on the street outside, looking at the misty sky, he sighed silently.

I need to advance as soon as possible.

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CHAPTER 445
LIVE BROADCAST

Lightning streaked across the sky, illuminating the pitch-black city walls.

Carrying a leather bag on his back and the Axe of Hurricane in hand, Derrick Berg stood outside the doorway to a cave with nearly ten of his teammates.

Lifting his eyes up, he saw that, between the stone cracks of the city wall, the dry and hardened black soil was crusting, but a bunch of tenacious weeds had grown out; they were densely packed and resembled human hair.

At that moment, he hurriedly withdrew his gaze and looked towards the city gate when he heard light footsteps.

As the lightning and darkness alternated, a tall figure slowly walked over, carrying two straight swords which were crossed on his back.

Then, his pale, disheveled hair; his ancient eyes; his twisted, deep; old scars; and his perennially-unchanged brown coat and flaxen-colored shirt entered Derrick and the others' sight.

The approaching person was the Chief of the six-member council of the City of Silver, Colin Iliad, a powerful Demon Hunter.

After greeting him, Derrick subconsciously looked at the Chief's waist. There was a leather belt divided into many compartments, each with a different metal bottle inside.

This was a symbol of an experienced and powerful Demon Hunter.

Derrick had previously heard his parents mention that Demon Hunters were good at discovering the weaknesses for different monsters, identifying the uses of various materials, and were able to use their special Cogitation state against the former. With the latter, they could concoct corresponding magical medicine, holy ointments, essential oils, and special imprints. Then, through consumption, smearing, and using these items, they could achieve the effect of restraining the target.

In a sense, experienced, knowledgeable, well-prepared, and sharp Demon Hunters were the nemesis of the vast majority of monsters. The amount and variety of small metal bottles at their waist represented their "experience."

Of course, this was only a portion of the Demon Hunters' Beyonder powers. Just by relying on these, they couldn't be called demigods or Saints.

Collin looked around and confirmed that all the team members were present. He then said in a low voice, "Light up. Let's go."

Two team members immediately lit the candles in their lanterns, letting the faint yellow light shine through the extremely thin leather.

During "daytime," when the frequency of lightning was relatively high, there was no need to use candles in the City of Silver as there was "illumination" every two to three seconds. Furthermore, the monsters in the nearby area had been cleaned out again and again. However, once they left the City of Silver and entered the darkness, they had to maintain sufficient candlelight. Otherwise, once the lightning failed to illuminate the skies, causing a dark environment that exceeded five seconds, there was a high chance for the team to suffer from an assault by certain monsters.

Intense fighting wasn't the most frightening development. What Derrick remembered so vividly was a story his parents had told him.

Once, while they were exploring the depths of the darkness, because of a previous battle with a horde of rotting corpses, the candles couldn't be replaced in time. This led them to endure being engulfed in darkness for as

long as eight seconds. When the lightning flashed again and the candlelight appeared, they were stunned to see that only five of their original eight teammates remained. The other three had vanished in silence, never to be seen again.

Taking a deep breath, Derrick gripped the Axe of Hurricane tightly and walked in the middle of the team, following the Chief in a predetermined direction.

A bolt of lightning flashed, causing the plains covered in tall black grass to appear like an eerie oil painting.

The exploratory team of 10 Beyonders walked along the path filled with craggy gravel, venturing deep into the black grass.

The lightning subsided, and the dense darkness instantly swept over them, almost completely engulfing them.

The yellow candlelight pierced through the leather and, weakly, swayed to and fro, guarding the surrounding area.

…

East Borough, in a greasy and cheap coffee shop.

In accordance with the previously agreed upon appointment, Klein found Old Kohler, who was applying butter to his toast.

He glanced at the crumpled cigarette on the table and smiled.

"Newly bought?"

"No, it's from the past. I haven't smoked since, but I would always carry it with me, occasionally taking it out to sniff at it. Heh heh, this will remind me of that vagrant life of mine. Back then, I really felt like I could die at any moment." Old Kohler's tone carried a hint of fear.

Klein took 20 soli in change, which he had changed earlier, and pushed it across the table while sitting down.

"I was very satisfied with the information from the last time."

Without waiting for Old Kohler to give a modest reply, he turned his head and looked towards the counter.

"A loaf of oatmeal bread, two slices of toast, a block of butter, a serving of beef stew with potatoes, and a one-pence cup of tea."

"Mr. Moriarty, didn't you have dinner yesterday?" Old Kohler was stunned for a moment as he held the cash.

Klein shook his head and smiled.

"I'll be very busy later and might not have time for lunch."

He needed to pretend that he was active and serious; after all, he had received a hundred pounds from Prince Edessak.

Old Kohler didn't ask any more questions. He looked around cautiously while stuffing the notes into his pocket.

"There are some results from the matter you previously asked me to find out more about. Azik Eggers's bounty comes from a few gang leaders and some intelligence dealers. Well, I don't know who entrusted the task to them since it's difficult to make contact with them."

MI9… Klein nodded.

"That's enough. There's no need to delve deeper. It's too dangerous."

Old Kohler heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Two days ago, someone at a budget hotel on Golden Cloak Street saw someone who appeared to be Azik

Eggers. It's said that the person was basically a carbon copy of the picture on the bounty notice."

"…”

Klein's heart palpitated as he smiled instead of showing surprise.

"And then? Could it be that the moment I prepared to try for this bounty, the matter is over?"

"And then? With that clue, quite a number of bounty hunters rushed over, but they didn't find anything. Well, they said that there were traces of a fight in the room." Old Kohler tried his best to recall the information he had gathered.

The intelligence would definitely be sent to MI9 first… Did Mr. Azik have a secret standoff with them? I wonder what the outcome was… Klein took a glance at the boss who was coming over with a plate. He pretended to mutter to himself and said to Old Kohler, "Take me to Golden Cloak Street later. Maybe I can find some clues."

It was past breakfast time in East Borough, and there were very few customers in the cheap coffee shop.

"Alright." Old Kohler agreed without hesitation.

"A total of sixteen and a half pence." The boss placed Klein's breakfast on the table. There wasn't much beef with the potatoes, but the stew was very overcooked. It was obvious that it had been prepared beforehand. The thick aroma tantalized Old Kohler's taste buds to the point that he involuntarily gulped a mouthful of saliva.

After paying the bill, Klein picked up a fork and spoon and said to Old Kohler, "Continue."

"There aren't many people looking for the believers of The Fool anymore, except for a few stubborn bounty hunters… Many unemployed textile women, including some male workers, left East Borough…" Old Kohler went down a list of matters.

"What?" Klein swallowed the beef and looked up. "Left East Borough?"

"They must've found some other job. As for where they went, I couldn't find out," Old Kohler answered truthfully.

"Their families aren't aware?" Klein pressed.

"Some left with their unemployed family members, while others had come alone from outside the city to search for work." Old Kohler had already done some investigations.

Judging from the target's choice, there's something wrong… Klein made a mental note of it and continued to eat while he listened to Old Kohler talk about matters that had happened in East Borough recently.

After making an appointment for the next meeting, he put down the cutlery, wiped his mouth, picked up his hat, and said, "Let's head for Golden Cloak Street."

…

In the only budget hotel on Golden Cloak Street.

After the boss accepted a two pence tip, he led Klein and Old Kohler to the room which was suspected to be where Azik Eggers used to live.

"There have been many bounty hunters visiting over this period of time. Hehe, It made me earn quite a bit, so I have maintained its original state." The hotel owner opened the door with his key and pointed inside.

At first glance, Klein saw overturned chairs and rags scattered everywhere. There were no other signs of a fight.

With his considerable spiritual perception, Klein cast his gaze under the bed.

After staring for two seconds, he walked over and bent down to pat the bed.

Dust flew into the air with a poof as a gray rat jumped out from under the bed.

It looked normal, without any problems, but in Klein's Spirit Vision, its aura only had the colors: black and green.

The rat turned a corner and climbed up a wall, exposing its belly to Klein's eyes.

In that soft spot, its flesh was green with flowing pus. One could see that his internal organs had similarly rotted away.

Klein thoughtfully looked back at Old Kohler, who wasn't paying attention to the rat.

"Has the bounty for Azik Eggers been withdrawn?"

"No." Old Kohler shook his head in confirmation.

Klein examined it again, he then stepped out and said, "Let's go, there's no valuable clues."

…

15 Minsk Street.

Klein, who had been "busy" all day, lay down on his bed and entered the dream world.

Scenes that were continuous at times, and at other times fragmented, swept past and all of a sudden, Klein woke up. He knew that he was dreaming.

A power has invaded my dreams… Klein maintained his previous dazed state, casually sizing up his surroundings.

He found himself in a suburb of fertile fields.

A river flowed over from the distance and made a turn around the cliff in front of him.

One side of the cliff was bare, revealing a pure white rock. Looking from afar, it seemed to have a kind of holy beauty.

Nearly ten men and women wearing black coats or dark jackets surrounded a hidden underground entrance to the bay, among them was Klein's acquaintance, Ikanser Bernard.

White Cliff Town… Stratford River Creek. Machinery Hivemind… Are they exploring the Amon family tomb? But why would there be scenes of it in my dreams? Klein was puzzled.

At that moment, he saw the water on the surface of the river undulate, rapidly forming a line of white words: "Your loyal and humble servant, Arrodes, is here to report to you on the exploration's situation."

"…”

Klein's mouth turned agape, momentarily losing the ability to speak. Then, a voice echoed in his head: *Tell me, why would a perfectly good mirror be a snitch?*

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CHAPTER 446
MACHINERY HIVEMIND'S COMBAT STYLE

In an instant, Klein switched to his unfathomable state as "The Fool who overlooked everything." He nodded and said, "Not bad."

Ahead of him, the river surged, and the white words squirmed and changed before taking shape again.

"What follows is the exploration process your loyal servant, Arrodes, has recorded. You can choose to speed up or skip certain scenes at any time."

This sentence froze for two seconds, and then the scene abruptly zoomed in. Klein instantly appeared beside Ikanser Bernard, but no one noticed him.

He looked around and felt that he was surrounded by living people with lifelike scenes. Nothing about his surroundings looked unreal, making him feel as if though he was there in person.

I can even speed up or skip certain scenes… The original form of this mirror, Arrodes, is a virtual reality family cinema… Klein couldn't help but lampoon.

He took another look at the Machinery Hivemind members and saw that it was led by an old man in white priest robes and a cleric cap. His face was unusually kind, and his expression was calm and gentle.

"Your Grace, everyone is ready," Ikanser approached the elder and said with a bow.

Archbishop… This is the archbishop of the Church of Steam and Machinery's Backlund diocese, the demigod, Horamick Haydn? The Machinery Hivemind really is cautious, and not careless…

Who knows, they might have even brought along a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact and performed a divination in advance. After all, they're in control of the Mystery Pryer pathway. Luckily, I can basically confirm that the fog's anti-divination or divination interference abilities are similar to the Cards of Blasphemy, allowing the result to be as ordinary as possible and the least bit suspicious; otherwise, certain matters might be exposed…

*However, there's a certain probability that the meeting between Miss Sharron and I will appear, because, to me, that isn't something harmful. It depends on whether a Wraith's instinct to interfere with divination will affect the Machinery Hivemind's attempt. Wait, the Machinery Hivemind is highly likely to have relied on Arrodes, and based on its performance from just now and previously, it isn't impossible for him to curry favor with me by adding some mosaics… *Klein thought in enlightenment.

At this point, Horamick Haydn drew a triangular Sacred Emblem on his chest.

"Begin the operation. God will protect us."

Nearly ten Beyonders headed down as Klein followed closely behind. He didn't "fast-forward" at all.

He had always been curious about the combat styles of Low- and Mid-Sequence Beyonders of the Machinery Hivemind, and he wanted to take this opportunity to experience it.

In addition, he was also greatly concerned about how a demigod really did in combat, as well as the secrets hidden in the Amon family tomb.

After being ransacked by time, in a period spanning one or two thousand years, the black marble staircase still retained its hardness without any signs

of corrosion. The Machinery Hivemind members followed it all the way underground, where they saw the unique asymmetrical stone pillars and axe-and-blade scuffing from the period of the Fourth Epoch.

The pillars stood on either side of the wide road, and in front of them was a large, heavy, dark gray stone bifold door.

The stone door had already cracked open, wide enough for two people to walk alongside each other. It was completely dark inside.

The Machinery Hivemind members were in no hurry to enter. They carefully searched the surrounding area with lanterns, but they found nothing of value.

"According to the plan, the first group will begin with a preliminary clean-up." With the archbishop's approval, Ikanser pushed down his hat, compressing his fluffy hair.

Clean-up? By the side, Klein ruminated over the word.

Amidst his puzzlement, the two strongest and burliest male Machinery Hivemind team members each laid down a long black box on their backs and opened them up.

Inside one long box was a sturdy, heavy, iron-black cannon-shaped object. Its surface was engraved with dense and arcane patterns. In the other box was a complex and exquisite firearm with a chain of pale golden bullets inserted into it.

One of the two team members carried the cannon-shaped object and trudged to the open stone door.

Another Machinery Hivemind member picked up the peculiar gun, adjusted the bullet chain, and followed slightly behind.

After the two of them glanced at each other, the cannon-shaped object on the former's shoulder rapidly lit up, outlining burning patterns and imprints before a loud salvo.

Boom!

A golden fireball, akin to a miniature sun, flew out from the "cannon barrel" and into the darkness.

Boom!

The ground trembled slightly, and intense light was emitted from the crack.

The body of the Machinery Hivemind member, who was holding onto the "cannon barrel," clearly sank a little as his feet trembled.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

He repeatedly used the Beyonder weapon to launch one golden "cannonball" after another at different spots, causing the tomb to sway without a speck of dust falling.

After he came to a stop, the team member with the peculiar gun stepped forward and pulled the trigger.

Da! Da! Da! Da! Da!

The sound of machine-gun fire echoed as one pale golden bullet after another flew out, purifying the danger in the depths of the darkness.

…Isn't this the bombardment effect I've always wanted? Furthermore, they're using Beyonder expendables like purifying bullets and exorcism cannonballs… How extravagant! Is this the combat style of the Machinery Hivemind? Klein's stared with his eyes wide open and his mouth slightly agape.

After the series of savage bombardments, Ikanser raised his voice above the rumbling echoes and said, "Group two, do the follow-up clean-up."

There's more… Klein felt a little numb from what was happening.

The second group was also made up of two team members who used scrolls made of different kinds of leather.

They chanted simplified incantations, activated the scrolls, and tossed them inside.

The construct behind the stone door was suddenly shrouded by gentle and pure light. Droplets of golden holy rain pattered down, "cleansing" everything in the area.

Klein looked at this scene and suddenly found it somewhat ridiculous.

Wait, aren't you guys here to engage in archaeological studies? Aren't you professional "archaeologists?" Aren't you afraid that the tomb would collapse from using such clean-up methods?

While these thoughts flashed through his mind, the second team was done, and they shouted at Ikanser, "Deacon, as expected, the construct's structural integrity hasn't been destroyed."

They were clearly prepared.

"Alright, continue forward." Ikanser gave the order.

Klein walked in the middle, through the stone door, and saw piles of dirt and debris on the ground. It was impossible to tell what kind of monsters had once been active here, and no one could guess the functions of the mechanisms that had been set up here.

After these "cleaning up" procedures, as long as one didn't dodge in advance, no Beyonder below that of High-Sequence Beyonders would be

able to withstand it… Klein once again gained a deeper understanding of what the aesthetic of violence was like and what it meant to be simple, direct, and unreasonable.

In what followed, the previous scenes were repeated over and over again. The Machinery Hivemind team members smoothly approached, exploring one area after another, occasionally harvesting some Beyonder characteristics that were beginning to gather.

"There are no murals…" Seeing the main tomb chamber in sight, the archbishop of the Church of the God of Steam, Horamick Haydn stopped and muttered to himself in puzzlement.

Klein, who was considered half a historian, was equally puzzled.

Generally speaking, a noble family member's grave would more or less express their position and honor when they were alive.

And when a grave became a tomb or even a mausoleum, it was very common for a mural to be used to describe its master's life when it possessed enough space. In even older and more obscure eras, this wasn't rare, and it was even the most common method—the first thing humans learned was drawings, not writing.

Thus, it really was a little strange that there were no similar murals in the tomb of a Fourth Epoch noble family.

Upon hearing the archbishop's question, Ikanser immediately ordered the men to spread out in groups of two to search the vicinity for relevant traces of murals.

Watching from the sidelines, Klein couldn't help but want to "fast forward" a little to immediately see the outcome.

At that moment, he noticed that the two Machinery Hivemind members in the left corner had suddenly turned into three!

One of them looked identical to Ikanser Bernard, his fluffy hair propping his hat high.

This… Klein was first stunned before he made a guess.

The moment he had the thought, Ikanser walked over to the team member closest to him.

"Any discoveries?" He cleared his throat and lowered his voice.

The team member turned around warily, but immediately relaxed when he saw that it was Deacon Ikanser.

"No…” Before he could finish his sentence, the "Ikanser" in front of him suddenly turned into a piece of human skin and enveloped his body.

The pale human skin tightly wrapped around him, and his face began to form the outline of his facial features. During this process, there were no additional sounds, nor were there any abnormal movements that were triggered.

All of a sudden, the human skin began to emit rays of light, just like the rising of the sun!

The human skin immediately turned translucent and quickly soared into the air as if it was being burned.

A black whip immediately lashed out, striking its body, causing its movements to clearly slow down.

In such a battle, slowness was an "Original Sin." One Beyonder weapon after another, burning scrolls, and pale golden bullets were released towards the human skin.

After a brilliant burst of light, countless ashes fell from the sky.

All of them coruscated faint light and slowly "struggled" to gather together.

*It really is a Human-skinned Shadow… *Klein turned his attention to the Machinery Hivemind members who had just been attacked.

The man pulled at his collar and pulled out a protective charm. There were many symbols and magic labels related to the sun on it.

"Thankfully, the archbishop got us to wear these things!" he held the lantern and sincerely praised.

It was only then that Klein realized that his brooch had the quality of the night, his ring had the intensity of the storm, and his belt exuded the sense of physical strength…

Although they aren't all mystical items, most of them are in the category of charms and Beyonder weapons. Even if their effects will quickly decline, they're still worth a lot! If you weren't an Artisan or a rich Beyonder, there's no way to gather that much… Is this the combat style of the Machinery Hivemind? Burning money… Klein felt a sudden setback, and it took him a long time to recover.

At that moment, the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic gathered and took form. It was like a huge diamond with countless sides reflecting light, and each side reflected a different face.

The faces were densely packed, layered, and left one dizzy.

I'm just short of it… Klein was overjoyed.

After the Machinery Hivemind handled the spoils, they continued to search for the murals, but they didn't find any traces of them.

They had no choice but to gather again and head for the passageway that led to the main tomb.

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CHAPTER 447
PORTRAIT

After another series of bombardments, the passage into the main tomb was revealed to the members of the Machinery Hivemind.

The ground was littered with debris. The diamond-shaped Beyonder characteristic that reflected a human face lay silently at the bottom of the right wall, glowing with the light of two other objects.

The entire tunnel, including the two walls that lined the sides and the stone ceiling, was filled with potholes. However, one thing remained undamaged.

It was a frame that was hung up ahead about seven meters away. It was brown in color, and the wood grain was obvious, but only the side of the frame was revealed.

Without anyone mentioning anything, all the Beyonders present could tell that it was strange.

At this moment, the archbishop of the Church of Steam and Machinery, Horamick Haydn stepped forward and said in a gentle voice, "This is likely to be the Specter Portrait Frame that belongs to the Amon family according to the records. As long as one walks into its range and is illuminated by it, their Spirit Body will instantly be separated from their flesh and blood, turning into a portrait and be forever sealed inside. In this state, even if the portrait is replaced, there is no way of rescuing the person without the corresponding methods.

"If the duration of being sealed is too long, the body would already be dead; then, even if one grasps the correct method to remove the seal, the spirit

will quickly dissipate."

As he spoke, Horamick moved forward, step by step, closing in on the strange frame.

Klein was a bit worried, not daring to watch the demigod fight against the Sealed Artifact, but he quickly realized that he was just watching a scene provided by the magic mirror, Arrodes. What was there to be afraid of?

This is very normal—it's just like watching a horror movie or playing a dark game… Klein calmed himself as he quickened his pace and caught up with Horamick Haydn.

The demigod archbishop quickly reached the confines of where the mystical item that needed to be sealed was. He wore a white priest robe and a clerical cap, and his figure gradually appeared in the glass on the surface of the picture frame.

Glass… Glass in the Fourth Epoch? Seems to be the case. There has at least been glass in the Fifth Epoch's history all this time, and there has been no mention of who invented it… Klein waited with great interest for the "battle" between the demigod and the strange Sealed Artifact.

Horamick's upper body fully appeared within the Specter Portrait Frame, but his eyes didn't lose their luster!

He walked towards the frame, face to face.

The silhouette within the painting flickered, as though it was constantly shrinking, yet it was unable to succeed.

Horamick stopped, took out a large, almost opaque black cloth he had long prepared, and he covered the Specter Portrait Frame.

The frame trembled a few times, but in the end, it was completely covered by the black cloth and turned silent.

Horamick seemed to be unaffected as he effortlessly removed the Specter Portrait Frame and finished wrapping it with the black cloth before tying a knot on its back.

This… This isn't mystic… Didn't you say that your Spirit Body would be absorbed into the frame and be turned into a portrait? Why is the archbishop fine… Is this the uniqueness of a demigod, or is it because of another reason? Klein sized up Horamick Haydn, but he didn't notice anything out of the ordinary.

His eyes are filled with spirit, his expression genial, and he's rich in flesh and blood… It's a pity that I'm not there in person. Otherwise, I could activate my Spirit Vision and have a look… Klein retracted his gaze and waited for the Machinery Hivemind members, such as Ikanser, to come over.

Horamick handed the Specter Portrait Frame to a member of the team and walked towards the main tomb at the end of the passage.

There was a black stone door filled with scrapes carved by blades and axes. In the middle of the door was a grayish-white disc.

The surface of the disk was divided into twelve segments. There was a black needle, just like a clock from the outside world.

However, the segments weren't evenly distributed across the disc. They were of varying sizes and extremely incongruous. Furthermore, each grid had half of its surface covered in a shadow.

"The coat of arms of the Amon family." Archbishop Horamick made a brief introduction.

He didn't explain the symbolic meaning of the coat of arms, because presently only Deacon Ikanser Bernard was qualified to know.

Klein, on the other hand, relied on his own knowledge of mysticism to attempt to decipher it.

Disc, twelve segments, and a needle. Combined together, they clearly represent time. It matches the Worm of Time which Amon's avatar left behind after it was wiped out. What should be twelve equal segments on a disc, are unequal in size, and there's a shadow over a portion of it. Does this mean that the Amon family is the dark side of time? Then, where does their title as a Blasphemer family show itself?

While Klein was thinking, Archbishop Horamick pushed open the stone door without any protection.

The heavy stone door opened, revealing an extremely spacious tomb chamber.

In the center of the chamber was a dais with a deep-black coffin on top of it.

The surrounding walls were decorated with iron lampstands, each holding a burning white candle.

All the candles didn't flicker. It was so quiet that it seemed like a scene that was fixed in place, completely devoid of any signs of it suffering the effects of time that spanned one to two thousand years.

On the straight path from the stone door to the coffin, there were corpses lying on the ground. They were all wearing black tweed coats, half top hats, or even ordinary worker clothes with a cap on their heads. It was obvious that they had entered in recent years.

The Beyonders that previously recruited helpers? How did they get past the area at the front? The Human-skinned Shadow and the other monsters were clearly still alive… With a mind filled with questions, Klein looked at the corpses.

What he saw left him immediately shocked.

The corpses all had sparse white hair, dry and wrinkled skin, and obvious markings on their skin. They looked like eighty- or ninety-year-olds.

There were no obvious wounds on their bodies as though they had died of old age. Furthermore, it appeared as though they had died recently and hadn't even rotted yet.

It's very obvious that there wouldn't be this many aged Beyonders exploring the tomb. Even if the discoverers of the tomb were old, they would still try their best to choose the young and strong when recruiting helpers… There's something odd about it! Klein frowned and looked around again.

He quickly thought of the Worm of Time left behind by Amon's avatar, and the coat of arms of the Amon family that represented time on the stone door.

Making people age rapidly is one of the Amon family's Beyonder powers? The dark side of time… The loophole in time… Could it be that as others rapidly age, the members of the Amon family would regain their youth and extend their lives? Wait a minute, for these Beyonders to easily barge into this place like that, perhaps it was deliberate on the tomb master's part. He wanted to rob them of their time in order to maintain his own existence… Klein looked suspiciously at the black coffin on the platform.

At this moment, the demigod, Horamick Haydn, raised his left hand and pressed it down.

"You will stop here."

"Yes, Your Grace," Ikanser and company answered without any hesitation.

As members of an official organization, they had read up on a large number of past Beyonder events. They knew that under similar circumstances, they had to obey the will of a High-Sequence Beyonder and absolutely couldn't act rashly or else they would die without knowing how.

Horamick looked ahead, and his eyes fell on a picture frame that hung upside down at the bottom of the dais.

His expression didn't change as he continued to walk forward at a leisurely pace.

Not making any preparations at all? The hallmark of demigods is to be "rash?" Klein was stunned.

He seemed to be able to imagine Horamick's teeth dropping, his white hair wilting, and his skin shriveling as he rapidly aged.

One step, two steps, three steps… Horamick, who seemed fine, suddenly trembled, and a sharp and piercing grinding sound could be heard from his body.

His pace began to slow down, his movements became stiff, and his skin visibly dried up.

There's something wrong with that… That isn't the aging process of a normal human being… What was that grinding sound just now? Klein muttered inwardly.

Four steps, five steps, six steps. Ripping sounds came from Horamick's body as something fell to the ground.

Klein subconsciously looked over and saw a gear.

A gear covered in rust!

Horamick continued on as items kept dropping from his body from time to time. There were rusty screws, melted wax, yellowed bones, and loose springs… His figure became increasingly thin and unsteady, as if it could collapse at any time.

This is just like a robot… Well, in this era's terms, "like a living doll"… Klein was suddenly enlightened.

He remembered that before Old Neil died, he had said that the Church of Earth Mother's Sequence 4 was good at Alchemical Life, and that the Savant pathway's corresponding Sequence was barely able to do so too.

As for Horamick, he was a High-Sequence Beyonder of the Savant pathway!

The Horamick in front of me isn't the real him, it's just a refined doll. Just now, the reason why the Specter Portrait Frame was ineffective was that a doll doesn't have a Spirit Body! The real Horamick should still be far away… As expected of a demigod… Amidst Klein's enlightenment, the archbishop walked up to the dais, bent his knees and back, and turned the upside-down frame over.

Generally speaking, when exploring a tomb involving Beyonder elements, it was necessary to avoid flipping items over, but this time, Horamick had made the opposite choice.

Following the flipping of the portrait frame, a wind suddenly blew in the sealed tomb, dispersing the formless imprisonment and silence.

The candles on the iron-colored light fixtures rapidly ignited, becoming unusually bright. However, they soon reached the end of their lives and melted away.

The old corpses on the ground rapidly rotted and stank.

In just a few seconds, the tomb's main chamber had turned dark, leaving only the lanterns that the Machinery Hivemind members were holding onto to barely illuminate the area ahead.

Horamick picked up the picture frame from the floor and went up the stairs to the dais.

He came to the black coffin, stretched out his right palm, and forcefully pushed.

Creak. The heavy coffin lid opened up a crack with a creaking sound, as though it wasn't nailed shut at all.

Horamick looked down and said in the same unchanging voice, "There's no corpse."

As the scene drew nearer, Klein saw that the coffin's interior was empty except for a pale gold cushion embroidered with a worm with twelve rings.

At that moment, Horamick turned around and the picture frame in his hand was reflected in the eyes of Ikanser and the others.

With just a glance, Klein's gaze suddenly froze.

It was a portrait of a smiling young man.

He had black eyes and black curly black hair.

He had a broad forehead and a thin face.

A crystal monocle hung over his eye.

He wore a black pointed hat.

Amon!

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CHAPTER 448
AMON'S POSSIBLE ORIGINS

Amon.… Klein said the word in his mind.

He had originally thought that the Blasphemer who appeared in the Forsaken Land of the Gods' City of Silver was a descendant of an ancient family like Amon. Through inheriting the legacy of his ancestors, step by step, he stepped into the demigod ranks. To his surprise, it was very possible that that particular person could very well have lived for more than two thousand years and was a member of the Amon family when it was at the peak of its strength!

An old antique… Why would he, for no good reason, build a tomb for himself? Did he fake his death to get out of a situation, or is there another reason, such as leaving traces so as to have time fixed onto his body? He was able to live from the Fourth Epoch to the Fifth Epoch, all because he was siphoning the lives of others? I originally guessed that he's a Sequence 3 or Sequence 2. Based on what I've seen today, it's not impossible for him to be a Sequence 1. After all, long periods of time would eventually bring about an intrinsic improvement.… Klein switched back and forth between puzzlement and speculation. His thoughts were like boiling water, gurgling non-stop.

The Horamick "doll" tugged at his throat and accidentally pulled off a piece of skin, revealing the complicated mechanical structure within.

His voice came out from that spot and brought with it the impression of leaking air.

"Search the corpses on the ground; don't come any closer."

"Yes, Your Grace!" Ikanser and company heaved a clear sigh of relief.

The corpses on the ground had long since produced their Beyonder characteristics. Some of them had even combined with certain parts of the body to form a terrifying mystical item.

In addition, the dead carried all sorts of items on them.

The Machinery Hivemind sure has reaped quite a harvest this time. Together with the Specter Portrait Frame and the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic, this completely makes up for the crazy expenses of the "clean-up"…A huge investment for a high return… Klein's eyes lingered on the ground for quite a while.

He inhaled, tore his gaze away, and followed Horamick, who didn't carry a lantern, to the wall on the other side of the coffin.

At this moment, the magic mirror, Arrodes, brightened up the scene, allowing the things in front of him to be seen clearly.

Klein saw that the wall across him had become mottled due to the rapid "weathering" just now. Many of the murals had been destroyed and could no longer be restored to their original states.

The only one that was more complete and could barely be seen clearly was a colorful mural at the top of the wall, which took up a small half of the dome.

It described a towering mountain range, and on the highest mountain peak, there was a huge cross that was taller than the mountain.

The cross was covered in layers of radiance, making it seem unusually holy.

In front of it, a tall and domineering figure could be seen vaguely. The mountain range was like a pet that lay prostrate at its feet.

This figure was surrounded by two-winged, four-winged, and six-winged angels. They were holding bugles, playing harps, or playing flutes, looking pious and sprightly.

At the foot of the mountain range, two twelve-winged angels were humbly walking towards the mountaintop, each holding a baby in their arms.

The baby on the left had curly black hair, and the baby on the right had pale blond hair.

One of their eyes was black; the other golden.

Elsewhere in the mountain range, there was a vague depiction of a giant with chains at its legs and a dragon that had its legs bound and never be able to land.

Horamick first looked at the baby on the left, and his genial expression became increasingly serious.

He said a word in a very low voice, "Amon."

Then, he turned to look at the baby on the right, and after a few seconds of silence, he said another name, "Adam…"

Amon, Adam… As Klein repeated the names, he felt that the fog that hung over the history of the Fourth Epoch and the Third Epoch was growing thicker.

He combined all the information he had learned and quickly made a guess.

On the mountaintop, the figure in front of the glowing cross is surrounded by angels, with giants and dragons submitting to it. It's definitely a real god that's at Sequence 0… Another being who likes to partially use the cross as a symbol is the True Creator… It's said that Amon is the descendant of an ancient sun god, but the one at the top of the mountain doesn't seem like a pure sun god…

Could it be that "He" is the "Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God" that the City of Silver believes in?

This is in accordance with the legends of the City of Silver. The awakening of the Creator who stripped the King of Giants and the Dragon of Imagination and other ancient gods of their authorities…

The so-called ancient sun god is actually the Lord that created everything as spoken about in the City of Silver? "He" may be in charge of the domains such as "sun" and "time." In addition, the authorities of the Giant King, Aurmir, and the Dragon of Imagination, Ankewelt, has likely returned to "Him"…

Th-this can no longer be completely contained within Sequence 0…

So, the original Amon was the descendant of the City of Silver's "Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God," who inherited the Beyonder characteristics of the time domain? This seems to slightly explain why he remained silent in the City of Silver's dungeon for decades.

Apart from him, there's also another descendant of the "Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God," named Adam…

What did Adam inherit in the beginning? Does he still have a descendant alive, and if so, where would he be…

What's the relationship between the True Creator and that person? Is it simply an imitation by using the Creator's title and the symbol of the cross? Or is there some deeper connection between the two?

Klein didn't let his doubts show too much. After all, the magic mirror, Arrodes, could be sizing him up.

Horamick stared at the mural for a while, then he suddenly took a few steps forward and pressed his extended palms against the wall.

Without a sound, the majestic mural disintegrated, turning into pieces of stone fragments that landed on the ground. Even the color quickly evaporated, disappearing without a trace.

The Church of the God of Steam and Machinery is consciously concealing the history of the Third and Fourth Epochs… Are the other Churches the same? Klein frowned and followed the Horamick "doll" to the other side.

After making a half-circle, they discovered another thing.

A stone door, which only had an outline, loomed in the corner.

At this moment, the Horamick "doll's" joints were constantly creaking, but this didn't stop him from quickly approaching the stone door and reaching out with his right hand to attempt to push.

Above the stone door, there was a sudden burst of aqueous light that condensed into a scene that looked so real that it seemed possible to directly touch it.

Dark blue waves were surging forward, and there was a dense black mist that looked like liquid.

A craggy mountain protruded from the mist, continuously flowing with viscous liquids.

Behind this mountain, the black mist seemed endless, with no end in sight.

There was also no limit to its depth. The deeper one looked, the more placid it felt. It was as if once something fell in, it would fall forever.

What is this place? Klein's expression didn't change as he muttered inwardly.

Horamick retracted his palms and watched as the scene gradually faded until it disappeared.

He leaned his head back and sighed to himself while feeling perplexed.

"The Abyss…”

Abyss? That's the source of all corruption. It's said that it's an abyss that can even corrupt a true god? Klein was amazed, but as a former Clown, he regulated his expression and limbs to appear unperturbed.

He immediately thought of something. Roselle, who was exploring the Fog Sea, had once deviated from his path, leaving behind a puzzling sentence: "I saw the abyss."

As Klein pondered about the layers of waves that were surging towards the black fog, he made a conjecture.

There's an entrance to the Abyss somewhere in the Fog Sea?

Immediately after, he looked towards the stone door. He suspected that Amon, who lurked around the City of Silver, had employed a certain ritual. After finishing the tomb, he didn't depart from it normally; instead, he used a special tunnel to head for the Abyss. Thus, in the eyes of most people, he was already dead.

As for whether the City of Silver or the Forsaken Land of the Gods was located somewhere in the Abyss, Klein couldn't be sure. After all, the history of this tomb was at least 1500 years old, so Amon had plenty of time to use the Abyss to go somewhere else.

Would he still occasionally come back to siphon off time? If he finds out that someone has dug up his grave, the expression on his face would definitely be very marvelous… Klein rejoiced for a baffling reason.

At this moment, the Horamick "doll" held his left hand in his right palm and abruptly twisted it.

With a creaking sound, his left hand was bent at the wrist, but there were no bones that pierced out of his skin, spewing out flesh and blood.

There was a heavy, black metal tube inlaid in his left wrist!

His entire left arm was a small-caliber mystical cannon!

To hide a mole of advanced technology, he truly is worthy of being from the Machinery Hivemind. However, the requirements and costs for such a thing are too high. Clearly, it could only be provided to specific personnel and not for military troops… Klein felt that today was an eye-opener for him, an opportunity to see another development path in the mysterious world.

The only problem is that Beyonder characteristics are conserved, Artisans are limited, so many things cannot be mass-produced.

The Horamick "doll" put his left wrist against the stone door.

Inside his body, the sound of gears grinding against each other as they revolved emitted an intense spirituality radiance.

A ray of light that was as bright as day appeared and disappeared.

The stone door suddenly turned into pure powder, as if it had never existed.

H-he destroyed the door? If Blasphemer Amon encounters an emergency situation and attempts to return here, only to find the door gone, that would be fun… Klein almost laughed when he imagined that scene.

This was the end of the Amon family's tomb exploration. The scene surrounding Klein quickly shrank and became the background.

An illusory, ancient, and bizarre silver mirror appeared in midair. The black, eye-like gemstones on the mirror flickered.

White words were quickly outlined in the mirror:

"Your loyal servant, Arrodes, has finished reporting and is ready to serve you at any time again."

Klein was a bit wary and unaccustomed towards the fellow who appeared too enthusiastic. He nodded and said, "Well done, you may leave first."

"Yes, the mighty existence above the spirit world." As soon Arrodes produced that line of words, the scene around him shattered into pieces.

After confirming that its power had left his dream, Klein thoughtfully said to himself, *The mighty existence above the spirit world? It really has vaguely sensed the gray fog…*

Does this magic mirror with a wicked sense of humor really wish to rely on me, or does it have some other purpose?

I have to watch carefully; otherwise, with it at the Machinery Hivemind, I don't want to be repeatedly blasted with cannon fire…

Rounding up his thoughts, Klein began looking forward to the next day.

After the Machinery Hivemind tidied up their spoils, they were likely to get him to choose an item!

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CHAPTER 449
BETTER CHOICE

In Empress Borough, inside the opulent villa of Earl Hall.

The cold air was kept out by the windows and walls. The building's interior was warm as though it were spring, and the fireplace was elegant.

Audrey Hall was having her measurements taken by the fashion designer, Mrs. Guinea, so that she could create a costume for Audrey for the new year banquet in consideration of her recent physical and emotional state.

At this moment, her personal maid, Annie, came close to her ear and whispered, "Lady Escalante is here."

Such a fast response? Audrey was delighted, but she didn't make an obvious show of it on her face. With a faint smile, she said, "Please get her to wait in my art studio. Hmm, for five minutes."

"Art studio?" Annie asked in surprise.

"Yes, I'd like to ask her to admire my recently completed oil painting. She says that content that is painted in a relaxed state easily allows one to express their true thoughts and emotions," Audrey explained unhurriedly.

Annie suddenly felt enlightened.

"Yes, Miss."

Less than five minutes later, Audrey entered the studio and saw Escalante admiring the paintings on the walls.

"That's Mr. Cenci's Inner Heart's Night, a masterpiece that allows one to feel peace," she smiled and introduced the painting to Escalante.

"Cenci's Inner Heart's Night? One of the top ten works of last year's 'top hundred century-old paintings' that the Tussock Times voted for?" Escalante was obviously the kind of person who often read newspapers.

And as a Beyonder of the Spectator pathway, she had a good memory.

"Yes," Audrey replied simply, as though it was a trivial matter.

"I actually have the honor of seeing the real deal…" Escalante looked up at the painting again.

She swallowed back the words "this is worth at least a manor," unwilling to appear too philistine.

Audrey didn't continue introducing the other paintings. She found a reason to send Annie away and motioned to Susie to "stand guard" outside the door.

Susie read her hint without any hindrance, wagged her tail, and scampered out.

Escalante closed the door and went back to the easel's side. Before Audrey could ask, she took the initiative and said, "We have both the Human-skinned Shadow's characteristic and the Wind-blessed potion formula. However, there is no need for us to sell it unless the other party is able to provide an irresistible offer."

The willingness to negotiate means there's hope! Audrey's green eyes darted slightly as she asked with a chuckle, "What do you wish to receive in exchange?"

Escalante stroked her hair and gave her pre-prepared answer.

"2,500 pounds for the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic, and 3,000 pounds for the Wind-blessed potion formula."

Quite a huge premium… Although Audrey didn't find them expensive, she lamented the fact that the Psychology Alchemists' premium had exceeded 50%.

According to the description given by The Hanged Man, under normal circumstances, the formula for Sequence 6 would've cost less than 2,000 pounds, but the closer it was to a High Sequence, the fewer potion formulas there were to circulate, making it very difficult to buy them. There was no normal situation, and what was even more important was that even if one chanced upon a sale, it was very difficult to ascertain their authenticity.

At that moment, Escalante added, "If the other party can barter with mystical items, all that's needed is for them to be of roughly the same value."

That is to say, you want mystical items more and can accept a price reduction for them… The Psychology Alchemists is one of the youngest secret organizations. They clearly haven't accumulated enough in this area compared to the others… Audrey pursed her lips and said, "I'll inform them, but I can't guarantee that they'll accept it."

She wasn't the least bit worried that the Psychology Alchemist would notice that she hadn't been involved in any Beyonder gathering recently. After all, her schedule was rather tight—afternoon tea, music lessons, dinners, dances, equestrian training, language lessons, dancing lessons, and so on. There were too many opportunities for her to interact with different people. In that case, perhaps a particular dinner was a cover for Beyonder gatherings, or perhaps the music teacher was a senior Beyonder, and it was almost impossible for the Psychology Alchemists, who hid in the shadows, to investigate it when they couldn't act openly.

Having said this, Audrey curiously asked, "Ms. Escalante, I thought you wouldn't sell the Wind-blessed potion formula since it's already at Sequence

6."

"Heh heh, if there's a chance, it might be more useful to spread this information out," Escalante answered vaguely.

In her mind, although Miss Audrey was a new member who had a high level of importance attached to her by the organization, she was still a new member after all. There were many things she couldn't know about.

Why? Audrey suppressed her doubts and smiled sweetly. She asked innocently, "Ms. Escalante, if this deal succeeds, can you count it as my contribution?"

Escalante broke into a laugh.

"Yes."

…

Klein "busied" all morning, until he returned to Minsk Street. He filled his stomach and prepared to rest; only then did he have the time and opportunity to listen to prayers above the gray fog.

Someone on Miss Justice's side has the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic? Seriously? Either it doesn't come, or it comes in pairs… As a secret organization, the Psychology Alchemists is quite qualified in the field of resources… Klein was suddenly left in the throes of happiness from having a choice.

Even if he counted the 500 pounds which The Hanged Man still hadn't paid him, he only had 1,335 pounds in cash. This didn't prevent him from seriously considering the request for a deal with the Psychology Alchemists.

After thinking for a dozen seconds or so, he passed Justice's words to The Hanged Man to see what choice the latter would make.

…

3,000 pounds? Alger Wilson, who was still in Rorsted Archipelago's capital, the City of Generosity, felt as if someone had struck him hard.

After he became captain of the Blue Avenger, he sometimes played the role of a pirate and sometimes a law enforcer, secretly exterminating several groups of pirates. But even so, the total value of his spoils of war didn't exceed 2,000 pounds, and a portion of it had to be distributed to the sailors under him. Of course, this didn't include the ships and cannons which were captured as they had to be handed over to the Church of the Lord of Storms.

This made Alger often sigh that most pirates weren't rich, that they were used to squandering on having opulent lives—liquor, barbecue, whores, marijuana, and gambling had drained the pirates of their money.

*Unless I meet a pirate crew with Beyonders, it would be very difficult to get rich so suddenly… *Alger paced a few steps, then he made up his mind.

He took out a gold mask from his undergarment pocket.

The mask had rough facial features, and the way they were formed had the characteristics of a primitive human being from an ancient forest.

Alger sat down, humbly recited the honorific name of The Fool, and said, “…I'm willing to use this mystical item to barter for the Wind-blessed potion formula.

"As long as the user wears this mask, they will become extremely calm and emotionless. At the same time, they will also obtain an extremely strong regenerative ability, exaggerated speed, and outstanding strength, as well as grasp a certain amount of black magic and primitive curse techniques.

"Its weakness is that as the number of times it's used increases, the wearer will become more and more unlike a human being. They will turn colder and colder, eventually treating themselves as a god."

…

Sitting in his seat as The Fool, Klein looked at the 500-pound note in front of him, the 5 strands of dark-blue hair as thick as a tiny snake, and the simple golden mask. He tapped the edge of the long table with his finger, thinking carefully about what mystical items he could use for a trade.

The All-Black Eye? Certainly not. This is the main ingredient of a Sequence 5 Nimblewright Master. It's just short of having Little Sun to obtain the method to remove the mental corruption.

Dark Emperor card? This card which cannot see the light of day has a value countless times higher than that of a Human-skinned Shadow's characteristic…

Mr. Azik's copper whistle? At the moment, its only function is the summoning of a messenger, and it's an important tool for communication. I can't sell it…

The copper whistle of the Numinous Episcopate member who left behind white feathers? Similarly, it can only summon a messenger, but the target on the other side of the messenger seems to be very dangerous…

Sun Brooch? This is something I want to use for myself. It effectively makes up for my weaknesses.

Master Key? It involves Mr. Door and has too many hidden secrets. In addition, just from the value of its effects, it pales in comparison to the Human-skinned Shadow's characteristic…

Biological Poison Bottle? This is very compatible with my Spirit Body state. If I use it well, I can even fight a group of Beyonders…

Demon hunting bullets, purifying bullets, exorcism bullets? There are not mystical items and are considered consumable Beyonder weapons. They are of very low value…

The Book of Secrets? This isn't a mystical item either. The Psychology Alchemists likely do not lack such knowledge…

At present, only the Beyonder characteristic of an Interrogator can be sold. However, the Psychology Alchemists wants mystical items. Furthermore, the trading venue is in Backlund, so it would easily expose information pertaining to Hero Bandit Dark Emperor…

Klein took this opportunity to sort out what he had and finally came up with a perfect plan.

He first took the form of Mr. World, manipulating him to take up a praying posture, and then he responded with a hoarse voice, "…I accept the price of 2,500 pounds, but give me two days to raise the money."

Immediately following that, Klein threw the reply scenes of The Hanged Man and The World to the crimson star which symbolized Miss Justice.

…

After receiving affirmation from Miss Justice, Klein waited patiently all afternoon at Minsk Street.

It was late afternoon when the Machinery Hivemind member, Carlson, rang his doorbell.

Klein didn't ask anything further. He followed the man to the Lever Cathedral near the West Balam dock and entered a three-story building next to the cathedral.

The signboard wrote: "Backlund Institute for Mechanical Research."

How academic… Klein suddenly thought of the Blackthorn Security Company and cracked the corner of his lips into a smile.

Under Carlson's guidance, he passed through some strange devices and found himself in a windowless room.

On the long table in the room, there were many items emitting strong spirituality, including the Human-skinned Shadow characteristic and the Specter Portrait Frame which was covered in black cloth. However, there were no characteristics left behind by the dead Beyonders.

Obviously, the higher-ups of the Machinery Hivemind don't want me to know about the Law of Indestructibility and Conservation… Klein wasn't the least bit surprised.

"You can choose one." The hatless Ikanser pointed at the long table.

Klein "scrutinized" the items several times before sighing.

"There's nothing I want.

"If I were to convert it into gold, how much would I get?"

He had already made up his mind that he wouldn't obtain the Human-skinned Shadow's characteristic from the Machinery Hivemind.

Although this could be explained as the need to create some mystical item or to try out a unique ritualistic magic, there was still a chance of exposing his own Sequence. In a situation where there was a better choice, Klein didn't want to take the risk.

Thus, he intended to take only money!

Not only would this help him gather the 2,500 pounds that the Psychology Alchemists quoted, but he could also effectively dispel the Machinery Hivemind's wariness towards him.

Ikanser was visibly relieved. He smoothed his hair and answered with a smile, "1,500 pounds.

"However, we encourage you to choose money, so a total of 2,000 pounds."

Klein immediately revealed a sincere smile.

"Alright!"

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CHAPTER 450
DISTRIBUTION OF MONEY

With the help of a bestowment ritual, Klein handed 2,500 pounds in cash and the gold mask provided by The Hanged Man to Miss Justice, and he used the image of The World to urge her to close the deal as soon as possible.

I've spent almost 5,000 pounds in the past two weeks. If I didn't leave Tingen, this amount of money is enough for me to maintain a lifestyle just like my landlady's family… A doll ruins one's life, consuming potions bankrupts you for three generations 1… Klein looked at the vast fog and the ancient palace, which had returned to silence. He was a little upset, as though he had lost something important.

He was quiet for a few seconds before returning to the real world. He picked up the remaining 830 pounds on his desk, and he counted out six five-pound notes.

Then, Klein put the thirty pounds of cash in his now deflated wallet and stuffed it solemnly into the inside pocket of his clothes.

He divided the other eight hundred pounds into two stacks, placing one stack in each of his side pockets.

After that, Klein opened the drawer and took out two of the five Deep-sea Naga hair strands that he had brought back to the real world. He wrapped them in layers after layers of paper and carefully put them into his pocket.

When he was done, he took his hat and cane, and he headed for the street corner under the glow of the street lamps at night. He got on a carriage and

headed for the Bravehearts Bar in the Backlund Bridge area.

In the heated and noisy environment, Klein insisted on finishing his glass of Southville beer before he slowly made his way out of the bar and into a rental carriage through the thundering cheers for the boxers.

Taking in the rumbling of the wheels, he intentionally closed his eyes. Suddenly, he heard the sound of the window being lightly tapped.

Klein's facial muscles twitched slightly as he opened his eyes and looked in front of him. He saw the pale and exquisite Miss Sharron sitting quietly across him.

Without waiting for her to question him, Klein smiled and said, "I sold the information you gave me last time for a good price, the one about the Amon family tomb."

Sharron looked at him silently.

Leaning his cane to the side, Klein took out two stacks of cash and a small clump of paper from his pocket.

"Eight hundred pounds plus two strands of Deep-sea Naga hair, for a total of about a thousand pounds; that's what you deserve." Klein took a silent breath and smiled as he handed over the cash and paper clump.

Sharron glanced at him and reached out her hand to take both items.

She lowered her head, looked at the items in her hand, and asked in an ethereal voice, "How much did you sell it for?"

"Two thousand pounds, so we split it equally." Klein chuckled.

If the Machinery Hivemind had only paid me 1,500 pounds according to the original plan, then I'll have to first owe you a portion of it… he thought gladly.

With a flip of Sharron's bloodless hand, the cash and the paper clump disappeared without a trace.

She raised her head and tersely acknowledged before asking succinctly, "What's in the tomb?"

"I don't know, I didn't go." Klein didn't disclose the help he had received from the magic mirror, Arrodes.

For an instant, he felt that if he described the experience in detail, Miss Sharron would've listened attentively with one hand on her cheek, as she had done before.

This Wraith lady seems to have a hobby of watching situational scenes and dramas or listening to all kinds of rumors… Klein summed up.

Sharron's expression didn't change. After a few seconds of silence, she said, "Someone is digging a tunnel to the underground ruin."

"Huh?" Klein wasn't able to react for a moment to what Sharron was talking about.

However, he soon understood which underground ruin Sharron was referring to.

There was only one underground ruin the two of them knew of, and that was the Fourth Epoch Tudor Dynasty ruin.

Someone is digging their way into the underground structure? Klein pondered for a few seconds, then he suddenly came to a realization.

"Is it that baronet?"

He had already forgotten the name of the hidden Tudor Dynasty descendant, other than knowing that he had an aristocratic title of a baronet and that he lived on Sivellaus Street where the Backlund police station was located.

"Yes." Sharron gave him a positive answer.

"What is he looking for? Doesn't he know that there's an evil spirit inside? Doesn't he know that all the Beyonders from his family died in there?" Klein asked himself a few questions.

Sharron sat up straight and replied seriously, "I don't know if he knows or not."

“…How much longer will he take to dig through?" Klein asked in deliberation.

"Another two to three months, for the time being, he's doing it on his own." Sharron provided her own judgment.

Phew. Klein let out a small sigh.

"There's no need to rush. When I'm ready, then we can go 'visit' him together."

At this point, he explained with a smile, "As you know, I like to make sufficient preparations in advance."

I won't get involved in anything until I advance to Faceless! He warned himself inwardly.

"Alright." Sharron didn't ask him what he was going to do, but her figure faded quickly, and she disappeared from the carriage.

Klein leaned back against the wall, feeling relaxed.

The ingredients for the Faceless potion has been reserved, and I'm just waiting for the "delivery”…My debts have all been paid off, so there's nothing to worry about… His mood was like a fizzy wine that had settled. Occasionally, there would be a little bit of joy that would silently surge upwards.

The only problem is… Klein touched his left breast, where there was a shriveled wallet.

He sighed and said to himself silently, "Only thirty pounds in cash, five gold coins, and some change…”

…

Thursday afternoon.

Audrey Hall was waiting in the study for the arrival of Miss Escalante.

After receiving The Hanged Man's and The World's replies, she had immediately sent a servant to send a letter to Escalante.

The content of the letter was very ordinary. Audrey hoped that the second psychology class this week would be brought forward to Thursday. In reality, Audrey had already made an agreement with Escalante. Once she expressed such an intention, it would mean that the other party had agreed to the conditions.

Tick. Tock. The wall clock on the wall moved briskly, and Escalante with her waist-reaching long hair entered the room with several teaching materials in hand.

Audrey immediately gave Susie a look. The big golden retriever somewhat reluctantly leaped out, lay down in the nearby shadows, and observed the people coming and going.

Escalante closed the study door, looked around slowly, then sat down across the small white round table and put down the teaching materials.

"Are they paying for it in cash, or with some kind of mystical item?" this member of the Psychology Alchemists asked in a low voice.

"One directly gave 2,500 pounds, and one provided a mystical item." Audrey flippantly took out a white cardboard box from her medium-sized orange handbag. The outside of the box was covered with a wall of spirituality.

After removing the wall of spirituality, she opened the lid of the box, revealing the simple golden mask.

Then, she recounted the flaws and effects of the mask.

To be honest, she was very curious when she received the mystical item. She had wished to test its effects since it was her first time coming into contact with a mystical item. However, she finally resisted her urges, as she didn't wish to turn cold.

"It's basically the same value." Escalante tried it and breathed a sigh of relief.

After two seconds, she pulled out the thickest textbook and flipped to page 48.

The middle part of the textbook had been hollowed out. There was an iron box about the size of a palm and a rolled up piece of parchment.

"Human-skinned Shadow characteristic… Wind-blessed potion formula…" Escalante showed and introduced them to her.

Audrey's gaze cast towards the characteristic which resembled a diamond. The face inside left her head spinning.This… This has the ability to restrain a Spectator's powers… Is this the Sequence pathway of Mr. World? No wonder… Audrey looked away and studied the formula.

This… This has the ability to restrain a Spectator's powers… Is this the Sequence pathway of Mr. World? No wonder… Audrey looked away and studied the formula.

"Sequence 6: Wind-blessed. Main ingredients: Six crystalline feathers of a Blue Shadow Falcon, a pair of Dragon-Eyed Sea Condor eyes…”

Before Audrey could examine the supplementary ingredients, Escalante rolled up the parchment in time.

After that, she set up the wall of spirituality around the metal box again, closed the textbook, and pushed the thick book towards Audrey.

Audrey held the book, but she didn't hand over the gold mask and 2,500 pounds to Escalante in a timely manner.

Seeing the look of puzzlement in Escalante's eyes, the prepared Audrey smiled and said, "The other party is worried that the characteristic doesn't match and that the formula is fake. They hope to verify it first.

"And before the verification, the money and items will all be held under my custody. All of them believe in my trustworthiness, and I do not wish to lose this reputation."

"I understand their concerns." Escalante paused for a moment before saying, "We trust you, too."

Since the money and items were in the hands of one of her own members, she wasn't worried about being cheated despite feeling upheavals.

Besides Miss Audrey is rich and powerful. She can be trusted to be a guarantor… Escalante thought with relief.

…

In the ancient palace above the fog.

Klein held a spirit pendulum in hand, divining the authenticity of the Wind-blessed potion formula.

He didn't wish to inadvertently lose the most experienced and powerful member of the Tarot Club, Mr. Hanged Man.

When he opened his eyes and saw the topaz pendant turning clockwise, Klein heaved a sigh of relief and sent his thoughts to the crimson star that symbolized The Hanged Man.

…

City of Generosity.

Alger first saw the endless gray fog before hearing Mr. Fool's low but distant voice.

"Miss Justice has completed the deal."

An illusory piece of parchment appeared in front of Alger. On it was the Wind-blessed potion formula.

With the potion going through Mr. Fool's hands, he had no qualms about the authenticity of the formula. He bowed his head respectfully and thanked him.

When the "illusion" dissipated, he immediately found a pen and paper to jot down the potion formula.

Then, he paced back and forth in excitement, muttering to himself, "Blue Shadow Falcon… That primitive island has it…”

…

After finishing the matter regarding The Hanged Man, Klein finally had the time to check his Human-skinned Shadow characteristic.

After confirming its authenticity, he relaxed and leaned back in his chair, exhaling happily.

Finally…

After three seconds, Klein suddenly sat up, and he decided that there was no time to lose. Tonight, he would concoct the Faceless potion!

Footnotes:

Ch 450 Footnote 1

This is a meme in Chinese, where the "doll" and "consuming potions" change depending on the joke.

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CHAPTER 451
FACELESS

15 Minsk Street, in the dank, cold kitchen.

Klein rummaged for his newly bought large iron pot, poured fresh water into it, and carefully scrubbed it several times.

Then, he dropped some matches into it and snapped his fingers.

The scarlet flames soared, and under his control, they quickly burned the remaining water droplets dry, without harming the surface of the pot.

This time, there were no ingredients such as pure water in the potion recipe, so Klein was even more careful than the previous two times. He wanted to ensure that everything was in good measure to prevent any problems.

Although he was able to divine whether the concoction would be successful or not, at least to not endanger his life, such a result could still involve his potion being ineffective. Attempting to extract the Beyonder characteristics from the concoction would be relatively difficult, just like the removal of the mental corruption of a Rampager. He would need the corresponding technique, methods, or rituals, and Klein wouldn't be able to gather a second round of ingredients within a short period of time either.

After finishing his preparations, Klein took a deep breath as he looked at the neatly arranged boxes. Finally, he recalled the potion recipe:

"Faceless:

Main ingredients: Mutated pituitary gland of a Thousand-faced Hunter, Characteristic of a Human-skinned Shadow.

Supplementary ingredients: 80 ml of a Thousand-faced Hunter's blood, 5 drops of black Jimsonweed juice, 10 grams of Dragon Tooth Grass powder, 3 strands of hair from a Deep-sea Naga."

He first picked up the cardboard box which came from Vampire Emlyn White. He opened the box and took out the glass bottle that contained 100 milliliters of a Thousand-faced Hunter's blood.

Glancing at the scale, Klein unscrewed the lid and steadily poured the sticky liquid into the pot with a stable wrist. The liquid changed its color depending on the variation in the lighting.

As it was a supplementary ingredient, he didn't pursue precision and didn't use chemical experiment apparatus to separate and titrate the liquid.

The Thousand-faced Hunter's blood was like thin honey that slowly filled the bottom of the pot. When Klein felt that it was about time, he stopped tilting it and allowed the liquid to flow back.

There's still about 20 milliliters left; my spiritual intuition is quite accurate.… Klein withdrew his gaze from the glass bottle and tightened the lid. This 20 milliliters of Thousand-faced Hunter's blood could still be used to make mystical items, Beyonder weapons, extraordinary scrolls, or for drawing symbols or labels in some ritualistic magic. It was still very precious.

After putting the glass bottle back into the cotton-filled box, Klein went down the list and added the black Jimsonweed juice and the Dragon Tooth Grass powder. He saw that the liquid in the iron pot started to bubble.

Without pausing, he picked up three strands of dark blue hair that resembled tiny snakes with his black-gloved right hand, and he firmly placed them on the surface of the liquid.

Sizzle!

A faint mist rose from the iron pot, and the color of the liquid turned a deep blue.

It already has such a strange effect even without adding the main ingredients… As expected of a Sequence 6 potion… Klein reached out and grabbed the silver tin box which Vampire Emlyn White had thrown in as well.

With a snapping sound, Klein opened the lid of the box, revealing a peach-like item inside.

He didn't directly touch the Thousand-faced Hunter's mutated pituitary gland. Instead, he placed the tin box over the top of the pot and overturned it.

A yellow-brown object with the grooves and ridges of a brain fell in, crashing into the dark blue liquid.

At this moment, no liquid droplets splashed up, and the pituitary gland that was constantly changing its shape silently melted.

The colors of gray and yellowish-brown quickly merged with the dark blue, and the bubbling suddenly increased in size.

At this point, Klein was a little nervous, but he controlled himself. He picked up the last box and overturned the huge diamond-like Human-skinned Shadow characteristic into the pot.

All of a sudden, the mist converged, and even the glow of the gas lamps showed signs of being attracted and devoured as the room turned darker.

When everything returned to normal, Klein finally saw what the final potion looked like.

It was blackish-green all over, and from time to time, it would produce a bubble the size of an eye, and as if it had a life of its own, it would produce a burping sound every few seconds.

When the bubble reached the surface, it would immediately burst, and during this process, it would reflect light in a myriad of colors.

The colors combined to form a picture of different faces, and the facial features seemed to be a random combination.

Klein picked up the iron pot with one hand and poured the liquid inside into a glass bottle that he had prepared beforehand. Because of a potion's characteristics, not one bit was left in the pot.

Using divination to confirm that the degree of harm was acceptable, which meant that the potion had been successfully concocted, Klein took the Faceless potion bottle and walked steadily back to the second floor, entering the room with the curtains closed.

After locking the door, he sat on the edge of the bed and, with the help of Cogitation, calmed his slightly agitated and anxious mood.

After sitting upright for more than ten seconds, Klein twisted the cap off of the bottle, raised his right hand, and swiftly poured the entire potion into his mouth.

A slightly tingling sensation swished in his mouth and esophagus, and finally, it fermented into a numbing sensation that made him lose his senses.

Klein's psyche seemed to be extracted from his body as he had the feeling of being a bystander and saw his mouth, nose, ears, and eyes melting—his entire face was melting!

In just two or three seconds, his face and head had turned into what seemed like scorched white wax. His body was similarly abnormal; it was as if his bones and skin were being melted by blood.

No, I can't allow such a situation to continue developing! Klein knew that if he didn't keep it under control, he could be on the verge of losing control at any moment.

As a "spectator," he tried his best to pull his thoughts back to his body, trying to visualize the layers of stacked spherical lights and maintain his state of Cogitation.

After a brief but repeated attempt, he finally felt his body once again. He tried his best to control every tiny part of his body to hold onto his lower limit.

As the melting and dissolving assaulted him again and again, Klein lost sense of how long he held on for, but when it finally came to an end, he regained the feeling that his body belonged to him.

At that moment, he knew that he had finally broken through the threshold and was now a Sequence 6. He was now a Faceless!

Klein didn't sweat, but he was mentally exhausted. He barely got to his feet and walked to the full-length mirror, trying to observe what he looked like.

Under the gas lamp's illumination, he took two sudden steps back and caused the floor to reverberate.

The scene in the mirror was extremely shocking!

Klein saw that his face and exposed skin were covered with dense, pale granules. It would make any normal creature who saw those go numb and subconsciously resist. The more timid ones might even lose their mind.

Despite knowing the acting method, and having completely digested the Magician potion, my advancement to Sequence 6 was still rather difficult. I was only two to three steps away from losing control. I wonder how much of a risk those Beyonders who relied on the accumulation of time and barely qualified to consume the potion faced. The probability of failure definitely

isn't low… It's no wonder Sequence 7 is relatively common among the members of the Churches, and they will shoulder the responsibility of captain or bishop, while the number of people at Sequence 6 begins to plummet… Klein closed his eyes and sat back in his chair.

With the help of Cogitation, he was able to restrain his overflowing spirituality and recover from his exhaustion.

After about ten minutes, the disgusting granules on his body had completely faded and merged into his flesh.

Phew. Klein exhaled, walked back to the full-length mirror, and he looked at his full-bearded appearance.

Suddenly, his facial hair began to squirm. His flesh and skin began to undergo a bizarre change like half-melted wax.

Within a second or two, Klein had reverted to his original appearance: black hair, brown eyes, ordinary facial features, a clean face with a deep outline, and a somewhat thin body.

He quietly gazed at his past self and stretched out his right hand to press it against his face.

With a gentle touch, Klein's face changed again. His nose bridge was high, his lips were extremely thin, and there was a tinge of elegance in his handsome face. There was an unconcealable pride in his appearance. It was none other than Vampire Emlyn White.

A little too short… He laughed at himself.

At this moment, the bones and ligaments in his body began to produce cracking and snapping sounds as his entire body suddenly soared up a little. He now looked identical to Emlyn White, externally.

I've noticed that I can accurately recall the exterior appearance and temperament of every person I know, and I can grasp their unique scent… Klein's pores squirmed, and his body changed accordingly. The smell of his body became different as a result of this.

He looked into the full-length mirror again, letting his hairline slowly recede, and he changed the color of his eyes into a deep gray.

Without a sound, Dunn Smith seemed to come alive again, and he was staring at the team member who always came to him to report on unusual matters.

Letting out a breath, Klein returned to his original form, but the corners of his mouth remained curled upwards.

He thought for a moment, took a few steps back, and looked at the magazine, Ladies Aesthetics, which he had bought to look at fashionable beauties, and he noted down the appearance of the actress on the cover.

Then, he went back to the full-length mirror and wiped his face with his right hand.

When he looked in the mirror again, he saw a young lady with black hair that went past her shoulders and delicate facial features.

It really works… Klein looked down at his chest, but he didn't see any protrusions.

Trying hard to control his body, he managed to create a pair of A cups by moving his fat and some of his flesh.

However, there was nothing he could do about his lower body.

That is to say, it is just a superficial change in appearance, nothing fundamental… Also, I can only grow taller or shorter by 10 centimeters at the moment. Going beyond this range would be difficult… Also, there's a

limit to the enlargement and shrinkage of the head. For example, I can't mimic Father Utravsky's half-giant head at all… Also, I can only observe the appearance and temperament of the target in an instant, without knowing anything related to him. It's easy for me to be exposed when facing a Spectator like Miss Justice… Heh heh, in the Clown stage, the Clown restrains the Spectator, but in the Faceless stage, it is actually somewhat restrained by the Spectator. Interesting…

Upon having this thought, Klein stopped changing and returned to the appearance of Sherlock Moriarty.

Divination, fighting, as well as a Magician's Beyonder powers, have all been enhanced. As for how much they've improved, it can only be confirmed through practice. I should find some time to head to the Quelaag Club tomorrow… Klein took one last look and went downstairs to clear up the mess.

After rounding up everything, he quickly washed up and crawled into bed.

Lying there, looking out the window at the crimson moonlight, he gradually calmed down.

After a few minutes of this, Klein slowly closed his eyes and smiled to himself.

Good night, Faceless.

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CHAPTER 452
BENSON'S DECISION

Townshend Street, in between Empress Borough and West Borough.

Xio Derecha was standing in a dark, secluded alley. Even without looking up, she could see the countless magnificent palaces and tall Gothic towers in the distance.

It was the highest district in the whole of Backlund, and it was also where the Loen royal family resided.

It shared the same or even slightly higher status as the White Maple Palace of Intis and the Aurmir Palace of the Feysac Empire in the Southern and Northern Continent and in the entire world, but its name was neither romantic nor ancient.

It was called the Sodela Palace, and in ancient Feysac, it meant "balance."

Xio looked away from the famous "Bell of Order" and directed her sight to the other side of the alley.

In the shadows where the street lamps didn't shine, a figure slowly walked out.

The figure wore a golden mask that revealed the lower half of his face. He was none other than the mysterious person who had previously sold the Sheriff formula to Xio and had occasionally entrusted her with some tasks.

When Xio and Fors discussed in private, they both suspected that the person was from MI9.

"Any progress this week?" the man wearing the gold mask asked as per usual.

Xio shook her head.

"No, I don't think anyone was keeping tabs on Capim before the incident."

She paused for a moment, then she reluctantly asked, "Do you still want to continue investigating this matter?"

The masked man was silent for a moment.

"There's no need, but if you hear anything related in the future, then contact me right away.

"Today, I'll give you a new mission."

"What mission?" Xio was completely in her bounty hunter state, ready to assess the risks.

The masked guy laughed.

"This is a very simple mission, and it's one that you've been dreaming of doing.

"Seek to purchase the Sheriff and Interrogator main ingredients in all your circles, especially a special ingredient that can be directly concocted into a potion. If someone responds to it, we will pay for it."

"The purchased ingredients will belong to me?" Xio blurted out a response.

This was her greatest concern.

"No, do you believe that such a simple mission would have such a high reward? Of course, if you're able to fish out the person we're looking for, it's

not impossible to negotiate and let you obtain the main ingredients," the masked man said with a chuckle.

"But I don't know the main ingredients of the Interrogator potion…" Xio hesitantly said.

"I'll tell you later. This is also our advance payment. Even if we don't find the target, you'll have the main portion of a Sequence 7 potion formula, worth more than 600 pounds. I think you're fully aware of our generosity," the masked man said in a bewitching tone.

Generous indeed… Who's their target, and why are they willing to pay such a high price to find them? Well, if he were from MI9, taking advantage of this mission to retrieve the Beyonder ingredients of the Arbiter pathway on the market should also be one of his goals. There's no problem about wasting money… As quite an experienced bounty hunter, Xio instinctively thought of a few things.

After some deliberation, she nodded and said, "I'll take this commission."

"Very good." The masked man's tone turned relaxed as he surveyed his surroundings and said, "The Interrogator potion's main ingredients are the horn of a Flash-patterned Black Snake and dust of a Lake Spirit."

After saying that, he slowly retreated and melded into the shadows, disappearing into the corner of the alley.

"He really told me the main ingredients of the Interrogator potion…" Xio was momentarily stunned.

Only at that point did she clearly realize how much importance the masked man's faction placed on this mission.

I wonder who their target is. It seems to be focused on some special ingredient that can be used to directly concoct a Sheriff or Interrogator potion… With this in mind, Xio suddenly froze up.

She remembered one thing. When she advanced to Sheriff, she had used a special ingredient she had bought through Fors, one that could be used to concoct the corresponding potion!

This… Is that their target? Xio instinctively decided to keep silent on this matter, to never tell the masked man anything.

She rubbed her fat baby cheeks and walked towards the street outside, ready to take a public carriage back to Cherwood Borough.

At that moment, she saw a brown carriage drive past. Her eyes were instantly attracted by the coat of arms on the carriage.

The coat of arms consisted of a single flower and two rings. There was nothing special about it, but Xio stared at it in a daze as though her gaze had frozen.

It was only when the carriage was far away, did she withdraw her gaze. Her mood immediately reached rock bottom. It didn't turn for the better, even when she returned to the shared rented house.

Seeing that her friend was in a bad mood, Fors poured two glasses of red wine and brought them to her.

"What happened?" She sat across her and pushed one of the glasses toward Xio.

Xio looked down at the red wine. After a full two minutes of silence, she said in a slightly hoarse voice, "On the way back, I met someone I used to know."

"Who?" Fors asked, cooperatively.

"Viscount Stratford," Xio replied to any question she received without elaborating.

Fors thought for a moment and then she said, "This Viscount seems to be the captain of the royal guards?"

As a best-selling novel author, she would receive invitations from noblemen who liked literature and participated in afternoon tea parties and banquets from time to time. With her professional habits of collecting material as a writer, she would certainly volunteer to understand more famous noblemen.

It was at such a party that she got to know Viscount Glaint.

"Yes, he used to be my father's deputy," Xio said with some difficulty.

"Your father?" Fors knew that Xio came from a fallen aristocratic family and had some secrets. However, she didn't know the specifics.

Xio picked up the glass of red wine and gulped it down, coughing a few times after she choked.

After calming herself down, she said, "My family was once part of the aristocracy. In its heyday, it even served as an earl palatine."

"Earl palatine? What position is that?" Fors asked, half curious, half trying to soothe her friend's mood.

"It's equivalent to being the spokesperson for the royal family, nobles that are the closest to the throne," Xio said in recollection, her face jubilant. "From that moment forth, our family had the fief a true earl would have, but it wasn't as illustrious during the time of my father. However, we still held the trust of the former king, Might-wielder William VI. He was the leader of the Household Guards Division and the captain of the royal guards."

Her tone gradually turned melancholic as she found it difficult to hide her pain.

"But seven years ago, he was accused of participating in a revolt, and he was eventually executed and deprived of his aristocratic title and fiefdom.

"Because of this, my family fell from grace, and many of my family members even died for no reason. In order to live, we changed our surnames and left East Tucker County…

"I don't believe that my father would engage in mutiny. He was so loyal to the royal family, even more so than his belief in the Goddess! In order to… Anyway, I left my mother and my younger brother and came to Backlund, looking for a chance to improve myself, hoping to restore my family's glory and my father's reputation."

Xio was vague about some of the things midway through her recount, but Fors didn't mind. She sighed and said, "It'll be very, very difficult."

But she immediately smiled.

"But I will support you!"

*And behind me is the mysterious Tarot Club! *she added in her mind.

…

Night time in Tingen City, 2 Daffodil Street.

Melissa, who was doing math problems, turned her head to the door and looked at Benson who had just taken off his half top hat.

"Where did you go? Aren't the results announced tomorrow?"

"They're already available tonight, and I happen to know two of the city's employees who are in charge of the unified exam," Benson said with a smirk.

In early December, he had enrolled for the Civil Servant Unified Examination, selected a relatively uncompetitive position, and, in the process, established friendships with several civil servants and a number of examination candidates through his eloquence and communication skills.

"What was the result?" Melissa unconsciously put down the fountain pen in her hand.

Benson's expression immediately darkened, but before Melissa could open her mouth, he revealed a bright smile.

"I passed!

"And I'm ranked quite high!"

"That's great…" Melissa stood up and took two steps forward. "You have to start preparing for the second round of exams at the end of January. It's held in Backlund. I need to prepare your luggage for you ahead of time… When are you planning on leaving?"

Seeing his sister's concern, Benson walked into the living room, smiled and said, "I plan to do so after the new year. We'll go to Backlund together and rent a house there.

"Regardless of the success of the exam, I'm prepared to stay in Backlund and try my luck. And you can take advantage of the New Year's holiday to transfer to the technical school in Backlund to prepare for the entrance exam at the Backlund University of Technology and Industry in June."

Just a month ago, the Backlund University of Technology and Industry had been reorganized and officially upgraded to a university for industry and technology.

Melissa's lips unconsciously pursed as she quietly listened.

She looked around wistfully and replied softly, "Okay."

…

Friday afternoon at the Quelaag Club.

Klein walked out and hired a carriage to head for Prince Edessak's Red Rose Manor.

It was the place where Talim had gone to a few days before his death. As a qualified detective, he would be completely unworthy of the 100 pounds he was paid, if he didn't hold any investigations there.

No matter what, I still have to put on a convincing act… Klein muttered as he sat in the carriage and enjoyed the scenery outside the window.

After his morning practice, he had roughly grasped the range of improvements in every aspect. Flame Controlling, Flaming Jump, and other Beyonder powers had become about 30% stronger. The might of Air Bullets and the length of the Underwater Breathing pipe had even increased severalfold. His divination and combat skills had also received a substantial improvement.

Paper Figurine Substitutes and Damage Transfer didn't experience much change, but because of the growth of his spirituality, the number of times that they could be used had increased.

Klein finally arrived at Red Rose Manor amidst the rumbling journey and informed the two soldiers guarding the entrance of his purpose.

After passing the news, he met the old butler from before.

"You can ask everyone here." The white-haired elderly butler paused, then added, "Except that lady."

That's what I want. I don't want to get into trouble… Klein laughed casually.

"Alright!"

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CHAPTER 453 "STAIRS"

Red Rose Manor, outside the luxurious rooms filled with all kinds of antiques.

Klein stood at the door and asked the sixth maid he had met today.

The young maid was wearing a black-and-white servant dress that had the characteristics of the times. She was pretty, in her prime, and had natural curls to her brown hair. She had a hint of playfulness on her face.

"Who does Mr. Talim meet when he visits?" Klein repeated the question numbly.

The maid replied almost without a pause, "Mr. Talim usually requests to meet His Highness, or to accompany him in riding horses, or to discuss matters. If His Highness happens to be absent, he will meet with that lady. They are very good friends. He receives permission from the butler."

Talim is good friends with the commoner lady who Prince Edessak likes? Meeting in private from time to time? It was likely that he was persuading her to leave this place, so as to not affect the reputation of the Prince… Klein nodded thoughtfully.

"They, I mean—Mr. Talim and the young lady, what would they talk about?"

When he asked this question, Klein suddenly recalled how Talim had fallen in love just recently. With his rich "experience" from the information age, he somehow came up with an extremely contrived romance story.

The maid wasn't afraid of the detective. She smiled, shook her head, and said, "At times like these, we're all asked to leave the room."

*This… *Even more than ever, Klein couldn't resist making associations, even to the point of changing the colors 1 of Prince Edessak's hat and helmet.

Without waiting for him to ask any further questions, the maid chuckled and said, "Detective Moriarty, if you want to find out exactly what the lady and Mr. Talim were talking about, you can ask her directly."

"The old butler doesn't permit that." Klein confidently pushed out his scapegoat.

He changed the topic and said with a smile, "You seem to know more than the other servants. You even know to call me Detective Moriarty."

The maid looked around, maintained her smile, and said, "It's because I've been serving the lady during my rotations. She's always wanted to meet you, Detective Moriarty. After all, she's close friends with Mr. Talim and cares a great deal about his death.

"Unfortunately, she always ends up missing you."

"Always?" Klein was sensitive to the words "always," "just happened," and "missed."

The maid nodded seriously and said, "The first time His Highness invited you to be his guest, she intentionally threw a tantrum and wanted to take advantage of the opportunity to walk downstairs to meet you. Who knew that you would leave in a hurry.

"Afterwards, she took the initiative to represent His Highness to place flowers on Mr. Talim's grave, but as she didn't know what you looked like, she wasn't able to find you.

"And today, she just happened to go to the golf course out back to relax on horseback. Otherwise, even if the butler didn't allow it, she would've tried to find a way to meet you."

*What a coincidence… *Klein sighed as he suddenly grasped a crucial point.

On the day of Talim's funeral, it was the commoner lady he loved who had offered flowers in the prince's place!

On that day, Klein was most concerned about the lady with the black veil and the sapphire ring on her finger. She might have a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or some powerful existence of an equal level!

All of a sudden, a thought flashed through Klein's mind—*the woman with the sapphire ring on her finger was wearing a long, heavy black dress. Accompanied by two maids, she slowly disappeared into the distance…*

One of the ladies had brown natural curls.

The image of the maid quickly overlapped with the one in front of Klein, and it was abnormally identical!

Klein's body tensed up, and sweat rolled down his back, but his expression didn't change at all.

Using the abilities of a Clown, he pretended like he was recalling the event, and he asked with a smile, "Were you with that lady on the day of Talim's funeral?"

The maid replied without much thought, "Yes."

*… Damn, it's really her! *Klein maintained his smile.

"Very well, next question."

As if nothing had happened, he began to inquire about other things, then he switched to another servant and continued.

However, Klein secretly shortened the process and sped up the progress.

He wanted to leave Red Rose Manor before the young lady returned from her riding!

At four o'clock in the afternoon, before the sky had turned dark, Klein left the manor much earlier than expected and took the carriage sent by the old butler back to the city.

Sitting in the window with his back against the wall wrapped in silk and muslin, he was relieved to have the energy to reflect on the whole situation —*it was Prince Edessak's beloved commoner lady who had cursed Talim…*

Why did she have to deal with a descendant of a fallen noble family? To take revenge against Talim for trying to break up the relationship between her and the prince?

But there's no need for her to do it herself. She can find a chance to mention it while in bed. Prince Edessak has plenty of ways to make Talim disappear without a sound…

Talim was in a state of deep love before he died. Yes… The first sign was after he successfully persuaded the commoner lady to leave Prince Edessak… They had an affair? So, the commoner lady who was brought back to the manor killed Talim in order to silence him and remove any latent dangers?

Logically speaking, it makes sense, but the problem is how could a person with a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or a powerhouse of an equivalent level be restricted by Prince Edessak? Even if the Augustus family is an Angel Family, with the accumulation of enough knowledge, they would still need to use tremendous strength and special methods to be able to restrain someone like that. This isn't something a prince can do…

Besides, how could such a figure have taken a fancy to Talim?

Why does she want to see me all the time? Did she sense that I'm using the gray fog to spy on her?

No, if that were the case, I would've been buried with Talim on the day of his funeral… Besides, when she first wanted to see me, I didn't have any blood, hair, or belongings. I hadn't made any divinations yet!

Klein was puzzled as he thought about it. In the end, he decided to bury the problem deep within his heart. He wasn't to probe or investigate!

I hope that the Machinery Hivemind, with my earlier reminder, will pay importance to this matter of noticing the royal family's abnormality. Yes, they might regard it with great importance—*not because of Prince Edessak's reputation, but for another reason! I hope the royal family continues to prevent the lady from visiting me… After a few days, when the time is right, I'll relinquish this mission, express how powerless I am on this matter, and then use the excuse of going to the south for a holiday, to change my identity and hide for a while! *Klein's heart gradually calmed down.

…

Evenings in Backlund were always replaced by dark clouds and drizzling rain, and Klein, who felt physically and mentally exhausted, held down his half top hat and walked quickly across the wet street to No. 15 Minsk Street under the illumination of the street lamps.

After resting for a bit and taking advantage of the dark surroundings, he took four steps counterclockwise and went above the gray fog.

After advancing to Sequence 6 Faceless, he had always wanted to check the mysterious space to see if there were any changes. However, as he was too tired last night and couldn't wake up in the middle of the night, he had to wait until he was done being "busy" outside.

In addition, Klein had to eliminate any interference in order to divine a particular matter.

That was, after this advancement, when his spirituality wasn't stable yet, he didn't hear the illusory ravings of "Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea… Hornacis… Flegrea…" anymore!

He wanted to know if this was a natural change after ascending to Sequence 6, or if there was some other reason.

Within the majestic palace, the mottled bronze tables and the twenty-two high back chairs with different symbols on their backs stood quietly, as if they had remained unchanged since time immemorial.

The same was true for the gray fog below them, as well as the endless emptiness around them.

But as soon as Klein entered, his spiritual intuition was keenly aware that the mysterious space was somewhat different from before.

He was in no hurry to explore or make any attempts. Calming himself down, he sat at the end of the table, conjured a pen and paper, and wrote a divination statement: "The reason why I haven't heard any ravings after my advancement."

Holding the piece of paper and muttering the sentence, Klein leaned back in his chair and quickly entered the dreamland with the help of Cogitation.

In the dusky sky and land, images flashed, and in the end, they all came to a stop on a particular scene.

It was Klein, whose face and body was still covered in pale granules. He was surrounded by an illusory, thin layer of gray fog that was undetectable.

The dream shattered. Klein opened his eyes and roughly understood the reason.

The gray fog has interwoven with reality, helping me block out the ravings that come from who knows where…

After advancing to Sequence 6, my connection with the mysterious space above the gray fog has become even stronger; thus, bringing about certain changes and allowing me to naturally borrow a portion of its powers?

From the looks of it, that should be the case.

Yes, I should try to explore the area and see if there are any changes.

Klein slowly stood up and followed his spiritual perception, walking in a certain direction outside the ancient palace. Beneath his feet was the gray fog that spread out like the sea.

He finally decided to stop after walking for an unknown period of time. However, when he gave up on exploring, a light suddenly flickered at the end of the path.

In his joy, Klein quickened his pace and approached.

Seven or eight seconds later, he saw a flight of stairs that seemed to lead to heaven!

The staircase was formed from pure light. It was holy, transparent, and untainted, capable of shocking anyone's heart.

There were only four levels as the staircase reached up into the void, and each level was rather high, as though it was meant for creatures even larger than giants.

Klein looked up, followed its path, and saw a layer of grayish white fog, condensed and suspended in midair, as though it was supporting something. It was a significant distance from the staircase of light.

The four-stepped staircase represents my consumption of the Sequence 9, Sequence 8, Sequence 7, and Sequence 6 potions? What exactly is above that layer of fog? Klein cautiously advanced until he reached the staircase of light and stepped onto it.

There was nothing odd about the steps, and they were as solid as stone.

Klein went up the stairs, climbed up to the fourth level, and then tried to look up at the area above the gray fog. Unfortunately, his vision couldn't penetrate anything.

He thought for a moment, then he took two steps forward and jumped up with all his might.

However, the moment he left the staircase of light, he lost his momentum and his Spirit Body's flight instinct. He plummeted straight down and landed on the bottom layer of the gray fog.

Looks like I need to advance another two to three other Sequences. If Sequence 4 really does result in a qualitative change, then I should be able to see after becoming a demigod… Klein looked up and made a judgment.

Footnotes:

Ch 453 Footnote 1

implying that it turns green, which in Chinese means being cuckolded.

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CHAPTER 454
WHO AM I?

After looking around, Klein, who had found nothing else, returned to the stone pillar-propped ancient palace.

He sat at the head of the long bronze table with his eyes half-closed. He examined his spirituality growth with the number of members he could draw in.

Including the empty positions that I could handle from before, I can still recruit four new members. However, there are no suitable targets at the moment… Klein shook his head and muttered before returning to the real world to busy himself for a good dinner.

After slicing potatoes, boiling beef, adding onions, and stir-frying them for a while, as well as sprinkling seasonings like sugar and pepper, Klein poured the prepared hot water into the saucepan, covered it with a lid, and turned the fire down.

I have to admit that a Magician's Flame Controlling is a good helper in the kitchen… Ever since I got it, my culinary skills have clearly improved… If it wasn't for the loss of control, the monsters, the searches, and the evil gods, the world would be at peace and perfect if everyone was dedicated to using their abilities without causing public damage… Klein sighed and left the kitchen to enter the living room.

As the light from the wall lamps spilled out, Klein, who had been planning on flipping through magazines and wait for the appropriate time to throw in the potatoes, carrots, and the proper amount of salt, he couldn't help thinking about how to act as a Faceless.

Just after waking up this morning, my spirituality had completely stabilized. I discovered that although there aren't any signs of digesting the Faceless potion in me, I do have a certain level of harmony. This is a phenomenon that never happened after consuming the Seer, Clown, and Magician potions…

With this in mind, Klein looked up at the oriel window. As it was already dark outside, it had become like a mirror, faithfully reflecting Sherlock Moriarty with his black hair, brown eyes, beard, and gold-rimmed glasses.

Klein nodded thoughtfully.

Perhaps it's because I've always been acting as Klein Moretti. Yes… In a way, Sherlock Moriarty is just Klein's disguise—not someone else.

Although I've received many memory fragments and gained some of the original's feelings that previously existed, in essence, I'm still a guest from an alternate world. I am Earth's keyboard warrior, Zhou Mingrui.

I've been through so much in the last five months that sometimes I even think I'm Klein Moretti.

Amidst the silence, many thoughts flashed through Klein's mind, giving him a lot of insight.

However, I'm still Zhou Mingrui who's donning the skin of Klein Moretti… Someone who has never given up the idea of returning… He slowly closed his eyes. When he opened them again, the figure reflected on the oriel window had already changed.

It was a young man with dark brown eyes and short black hair. His facial features were unremarkable, and he appeared refined, but he had obvious eye bags with an inkling of a double chin.

This was Zhou Mingrui from Earth.

*Long time no see… *Klein sighed, raised his hands and rubbed his face.

By the time he lowered his arms, he was back as Sherlock Moriarty.

After this period of contemplation and adjustment, he inexplicably felt that the gap between his spirituality and the potion had reduced significantly, and there were signs of them slowly blending together.

*No wonder Nimblewright Master Rosago's teacher, yes—perhaps his teacher would say that you can disguise yourself as anyone, but you are ultimately yourself… This is likely a core rule of a Faceless's acting method. Once one forgets this point, it would be easy to forget yourself amidst the constant changes, eventually turning into a monster. *Klein felt enlightened when he recalled what he had previously obtained via spirit channeling.

He crossed his right leg and leaned back, quickly coming up with a plan for the future.

Search for and conclude the actual acting rules for a Faceless…

In the Beyonder circles of Backlund, through the Tarot Club, gather information about mermaids, in preparation to complete the ritual at sea…

Directly or indirectly get the Solar High Priest potion formula to help Little Sun advance to Sequence 7, so that he has the clearance to obtain the method for removing a Rampager's mental corruption on a Beyonder characteristic.

But I can't fully place my hopes on Little Sun. I should still attempt to look.

Klein, whose mood was slowly turning staid, snapped his fingers, reducing the stove's fire in the kitchen as the fragrance of beef emanated.

At that moment, he heard the doorbell ring.

The visitor was none other than Lawyer Jurgen.

Even though it was drizzling and the ground was wet, Jurgen was still dressed meticulously. He even wore a vertical collar.

"What's the matter?" Klein, who was very familiar with Jurgen, didn't make any small talk and directly asked.

Jurgen put away his black umbrella, patted a few drops of water off of his double-breasted frock coat and said, "Sherlock, I'm leaving Backlund on Monday next week to go south on a holiday with my grandmother. The warm environment and the clean air suits her very well."

"That's excellent news." Klein took the initiative to deduce, smiling as he asked, "You want me to temporarily adopt Brody?"

Jurgen shook his head gravely.

"My grandma can't bear to part with Brody and insisted on taking him with her. I've already asked; as long as we put him in a cage and buy a full-price ticket, he can board the steam locomotive, but we have to keep the cage clean at all times to not pollute the air above."

*Honestly, the smell in the third-class carriage is enough to overwhelm the stench of cat poop… *Klein chuckled.

"Brody shouldn't be too happy to leave, right?"

"But he's even more reluctant to part with my grandmother," Jurgen replied.

He pressed his hat and changed the subject.

"I'm here to inform you that if you need to be released on bail or settle any legal disputes during this period of time, you can go to my colleague. Here is his business card; I've already informed him that he wouldn't be leaving Backlund this year."

What a professional, to think that he even considered this problem… However, I don't need to do that for now. I'm now an informant for the Machinery Hivemind, and I won't be remanded at the police station under normal circumstances… Klein thanked him with a smile, took the name card, and slipped it into his pocket.

Jurgen didn't have any intention of chatting or entering the room. He immediately raised his hand and said, "I still have to visit the rest of my clients. Sherlock, I'll see you tomorrow. No—I'll see you next year."

"Then, I must wish your family a happy new year in advance." Klein smiled and waved.

After watching Jurgen leave with his umbrella, Klein closed the door and sat back down in the living room.

At this moment, apart from the flame which was licking the bottom of the pot in the kitchen, there were no other sounds coming from the house. It was so quiet that Klein could hear the carriages outside moving in the distance.

He looked around slowly and saw the coffee table, contracts, cupboards, pens, porcelain cups, dining table, chairs, and walls.

Retracting his gaze, Klein leaned back against the sofa and looked out the window at the dark night and the street lamps emitting a misty glow in the dark. In the deep cold silence, he sighed.

"The new year…”

…

The lightning gradually calmed down, and the darkness became the ruler of the earth. The exploratory team from the City of Silver finally reached their destination after a short but, at the same time, not short trek and numerous battles.

On both sides of the street, most of the houses had collapsed. Only a few could barely hold on, but their surfaces were mottled with the dust of time.

With the help of an animal hide lantern whose light didn't reach far, Derrick Berg saw the completely collapsed walls and streets that were in such ruin that even weeds didn't grow.

On both sides of the streets were half-collapsed houses, with a tiny minority barely standing. However, their surfaces were mottled and filled with signs of aging.

The white and blue colors that formed the foundation of the coatings, the pointed structures which were different from the City of Silver, had already turned gray, making it hard for anyone to imagine their original appearance.

However, Derrick could figure out the city's past through such observations. It had definitely experienced a long history with a considerable number of inhabitants, developing its own civilization in the dark ages.

The humans here took potions, built and repaired buildings, and defended the city wall. About six teams or more had explored the outside and hunted monsters in search of the necessary resources to survive.

They would celebrate for any brief periods of calm, offering sacrifices to the gods and yearning for a response. They gave birth to the next generation, allowing hope to continue.

However, in the end, they disappeared into the darkness, losing all their voices and leaving behind only ruins.

The ruins were like a huge grave, burying a civilization that had struggled to survive but eventually vanishing dismally.

Demon Hunter Colin looked around, his expression somewhat solemn, as though he saw the future of the City of Silver.

He pointed ahead and said, "The other places have already been cleared.

"The temple is in the center of the city."

The exploratory team dispersed a bit, but they still maintained sufficient order and didn't let down their guard.

After passing through ruins that had been destroyed for an unknown period of time and went past streets so quiet that they drove people mad, Derrick finally saw a high, wide artificially-made platform.

On top of the high platform, there was a half-collapsed building. It looked extremely similar to the temples in the City of Silver. It had a dome propped up by pillars, creating an arched entrance.

The style of the buildings here was completely different from that of the other buildings. It really is true that they later converted to the Fallen Creator… The thought had barely crossed Derrick's mind when the four lanterns in the team went out at the same time!

All of a sudden, the exploratory team was plunged into pure darkness. There was no lightning in the sky, the candles on the ground had extinguished, and all human breathing seemed to disappear at once.

Derrick's body immediately tensed, as he felt as if some monster had stuck its tongue out in the darkness and was trying to lick his scalp, but his spiritual perception told him that nothing real had appeared.

At that moment, an immature, helpless, terrified, and dry voice sounded out by his ear.

It was a child whispering, "Save me… Save me…”

For a moment Derrick froze, not knowing how to react, but in an instant, a coruscating glimmer of dust appeared before him.

The dust exploded one after another, igniting a silvery white light that illuminated the surrounding area.

Colin stared at Derrick and said in a deep voice, "What's on your mind?"

Derrick instantly snapped to his senses and clasped his hands in shame and pressed them to his mouth and nose as if in prayer.

His body immediately emitted rays of clean, pure light, causing the surrounding darkness to silently disperse.

The other team members seized the moment to reignite the candles.

Because of the Demon Hunter's timely reaction, no members disappeared this time, nor were there any new members appearing.

Collin retracted his gaze from Derrick and looked at the half-collapsed temple on the high platform. He solemnly said, "From now on, we can't afford to be careless. We have to be on full alert."

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CHAPTER 455
HELP SEEKER

Within the half-collapsed temple, only a few stone pillars remained intact as they collectively supported half of the main hall.

At the very front of the main hall, there was an altar covered in cracks. In the middle of the altar, there was a huge, pitch-black cross.

Hanging from the cross was a naked man who was hanging upside down. Around his ankles, thighs, and torso there were obvious rusty metal spikes protruding outward that were accompanied by bright red bloodstains.

Derrick knew that this was the statue of the Fallen Creator, but he couldn't help look down to size up the statue's face.

He saw the face of the statue—the nose, mouth, and ears were all blurry, except for the eyes which were carved with abnormal clarity.

The Fallen Creator's eyes were tightly shut, as though he was suffering from guilt and pain.

"Look away, don't study the statue of an evil god!" Demon Hunter Colin warned in a low voice.

"Yes, Your Excellency." The few members of the exploratory team immediately retracted their gazes.

Before today, although the City of Silver had discovered many destroyed cities and written records pointing to evil gods during their explorations, most of the residents had never seen the statues of so-called evil gods.

The remaining area of the temple wasn't very wide, so the exploratory team quickly split up into groups of two or three and completed the investigations without finding anything abnormal.

Upon seeing this, Colin, the chief of the six-member council, said after a few seconds of deliberation, "Let's head underground."

As he spoke, he drew one of the two swords he carried on his back and smeared it with a grayish silver ointment.

Then, he removed a small metal bottle from a hidden compartment on his belt, pulled out the stopper, and gulped the contents of the potion.

At this moment, Derrick felt as if the light blue eyes of the Chief had become a little brighter.

The members of the exploratory team made their utmost careful preparations. Under the illumination of the four animal hide lanterns, they followed the stairs on the left side of the statue as they walked down into the underground area.

Derrick took his turn holding the lantern, walking at the front left as he cautiously entered the darkness.

He heard the sound of his own footsteps and those of his companions echoing off of the stone steps. They produced a distant and empty echo.

The echoes didn't suffer from any interference, making the absolute silence beneath them obvious. However, in the hearts of the exploratory team members, it was like a knock on the door. The attempt to uncover a secret that had been buried for an unknown number of years left them feeling extremely tense.

After walking without having any sense of time, Derrick finally saw that the road ahead had turned flat. He also saw the newly discovered mural which the corrupted Darc Regence had mentioned.

The mural was spread across two sides of the wall. It was simply colored and gloomy, looking ancient as if it had seen the vicissitudes of life.

Derrick took a casual glance and was immediately attracted by one of the murals.

On the wall to the left up ahead, a pure white cross was depicted in the middle. It was surrounded by seawater-like blackness, drowning all the humans who were struggling as they stretched out their arms.

Hanging upside down from the cross was the Fallen Creator. The rusted nails and blood-red stains were no different from the statues in the outside world.

But in this mural, the Fallen Creator was suffering from a black erosion, so much so that part of the white of the cross had become pitch-black.

In addition, the cross supported a hazy piece of land, and countless humans were kneeling and praying to the Fallen Creator.

Around the mural, in the deepest part of the darkness, there were six figures akin to evil gods.

In the upper left corner was a woman wearing a black, classical dress. Her clothes were layered but not complicated, and it was embedded with a starry sheen. Her body was relatively ethereal, with signs of rippling outward. Her face was blurry, as though she was wearing a mask without any facial features.

The darkness around her surged as one strange eye after another faintly became discernible.

Directly above was a young man wearing a pure white robe. His face was painted with a pure gold color, and there were tentacles in the form of light growing out of his skin.

In his hands was a putrid-green book and a radiant spear, and his chest and back were inverted.

In the upper right corner was a trident-wielding monster with an octopus-like head, wide eyes, and a body wrapped in lightning.

The feathers of countless birds formed his cloak, and the darkness turned into waves that supported the bottom of his feet.

At the bottom right was a supple and beautiful woman. Her chest bulged, propping her clothes up. In her arms was a rotting baby, and at her feet were black ears of wheat, spring water squirming with flesh, herbs dripping with pus, and wildly-mating animals.

Directly below was an old man wearing a hood that revealed his mouth, wrinkles, and a white beard.

The old man held an open book, and on top of it was an eye that was the symbol of omniscience.

At first glance, this old man looked the most normal, but the smile on his face was indescribably evil.

At the bottom left was a giant warrior in tattered armor. He held a long sword and was sitting on a throne with bleak dusk as its backdrop.

What this mural means is that when the Cataclysm struck, the evil gods climbed out of the Abyss. In order to save the people of the world, the Fallen Creator had suffered the vast majority of the sins and pain, and as a result, showed signs of being corrupted and having his image change… But, I think "He" is the worst evil god… Carrying an animal hide lantern in his hand, Derrick looked at the mural on the wall as he walked. He realized that the description was identical to Darc Regence's description with the core theme being that the place where they were had not been abandoned by the gods. Instead, it was blessed by the Creator and had maintained civilization through the apocalypse.

Of course, Darc Regence had only briefly mentioned it, and the details were far what the murals depicted.

Throughout the entire process, Derrick didn't let his guard down. He prepared himself in case any accidents were to happen so that he could respond immediately.

Under the dim yellow light of the candle, the exploratory team went through many corridors, halls, and rooms one by one, delving deep into the temple's basement.

Suddenly, a semi-open gray stone door appeared in front of them.

Outside the door, a cluster of beautiful mushroom-shaped objects grew. They were palm-sized, with white stems and bright red heads, sparkling with dark-golden specks.

Upon seeing these "mushrooms," the members of the exploratory team had their appetites whet. All they wanted to do was to rush over, pull out a stalk, and stuff it into their mouths.

*Gulp. *Quite a few people swallowed their saliva.

However, most of the people who were able to enter the exploratory team had rich experience and were of a relatively high Sequence. Having received a warning beforehand, someone immediately stood up and said in a low voice, "Those are rotten flesh and hairy scalps."

Derrick knew this teammate and that his name was Joshua. He had successfully traded for a mystical item from a particular exploratory expedition.

Joshua stretched out his left, scarlet-gloved hand at the door.

With a flash of light, a burning fireball quickly took shape and shot out, landing directly on those extremely tempting "mushrooms."

Boom! The ground trembled slightly, and an inferno spread out to cover the space of two meters.

By the time the fire subsided, all of the mushrooms had already disappeared, leaving only bits and pieces of flesh and blood. It left all of the Beyonders, who nearly failed to resist the temptation, disgusted.

Demon Hunter Colin didn't interfere with the actions of the team. He quietly watched from the side, nodding from time to time.

"Why would there be mushrooms made from flesh and hair? Where did the flesh and hair come from?" Joshua withdrew his left palm and muttered to himself in confusion.

Another member of the team made a bold guess.

"The original inhabitants of this city?"

It's possible… Perhaps their deaths were a result of turning into pure flesh and hair… Derrick agreed inwardly.

After a brief discussion, the exploratory team split into several groups and cleaned up the hall outside the gray stone door.

After doing all this, they regrouped and slowly passed through the door, ready to engage in combat at any moment.

Behind the door was a place that looked like an altar. The surrounding light could hardly dispel the darkness of the region which seemed to hide something unknown.

Above the altar, a similar pitch-black cross and an upside-down Fallen Creator was erected there.

Carrying an animal hide lantern, Derrick stood the closest as he instinctively swept a glance.

His gaze suddenly froze because he discovered that the Fallen Creator statue here was different from the one outside.

Its eyes were open!

He had blood-red eyes and black pupils, staring straight at any intruders like it possessed life.

Tat. Tat. Tat. Derrick heard the chattering of teeth.

He originally imagined that it came from a team member, but he soon realized that he was the one trembling!

Although he didn't understand much about the evil god's dangers, his teeth were instinctively chattering at that instant.

Tat. Tat. Tat.

His teammates reacted similarly.

At that moment, a speck of powder floated into the air. Demon Hunter Colin clenched his fist.

Boom!

As the sound of thunder reverberated through the air, Derrick and the others suddenly snapped to their senses, escaping their "nightmare" state from earlier.

Before they could investigate the area, the sound of weeping could be heard from behind the altar.

"Sob, sob, sob…

"Sob, sob, sob…”

In the chilling silence, Demon Hunter Colin calmly ordered, "Derrick, Joshua, go around and take a look."

As a chill went through his body, Derrick held the animal hide lantern and the Axe of Hurricane in his hand. Together with Joshua, he slowly walked around to the back of the altar.

As the darkness was gradually dispersed by the light, they saw a black figure curled up behind the altar.

After taking two steps forward, the shadow revealed its original form.

It was a seven- or eight-year-old child, with soft yellow hair.

He closed his eyes, as though he wasn't used to the light as he shouted in excitement, "Save me, save me…”

Derrick's pupils shrank, and when he thought of the cry for help he had heard in the pure darkness earlier, he subconsciously lifted his Axe of Hurricane.

At this moment, Demon Hunter Colin took a step forward and solemnly asked, "Who are you?"

The child stopped pleading for help and said reminiscently, "My name… My name is Jack…”

…

After dinner, Klein put on his coat and hat in preparation to head out.

He was going to find Miss Sharron, resolve the problem of the baronet digging up a tunnel, and ask for clues about mermaids. He wanted to complete these matters before Detective Sherlock Moriarty headed south for a "vacation."

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CHAPTER 456
PLAYING GHOSTS

Outside the Bravehearts Bar, a rental carriage briskly drove by.

Inside the carriage, Klein, who was wearing a half top hat, was sitting opposite Sharron, who was still wearing her black Gothic regal dress.

Looking at the expressionless and pale face of his former bodyguard, Klein was at a loss on how to exchange pleasantries. He could only go straight to the point.

"I'm done with my preparations."

Although Sequence 6 Faceless had only given him one Beyonder ability, all the powers he had before had experienced a clear upgrade, resulting in a great improvement to his strength. This was the best form of preparation.

However, a Faceless's powers could be deemed a godly skill in certain situations!

For example, when being pursued or trying to infiltrate… Klein couldn't help but let his imagination run wild.

Sharron listened quietly and simply said, "Tonight?"

She spoke with a slight rise in intonation towards the end to indicate an inquiry.

"If it's fine with you, then I'm fine as well," Klein responded, prepared.

"Alright." Sharron nodded.

After a few seconds of silence, Klein asked in deliberation, "Have you heard about anything to do with mermaids? Do you know where one can meet such a creature of legends?"

Sharron's blue eyes stared unblinkingly at Klein, as though she had transformed into a real doll.

After a while, she emotionlessly said, "There are no longer mermaids in places where humans can reach.

"Only the fishermen of the Gargas Islands would occasionally hear the mermaids singing in the midst of a storm during their long voyages to hunt white-tailed whales."

Located in the depths of the Sonia Sea, the Gargas Islands was the farthest human colony in the sea, characterized by local products such as whale oil and whale meat.

I wonder if this rumor is true or fake… Klein nodded.

"I understand."

…

The bell chimes in the night rang out quietly, as though they came from a far away place.

There was an abandoned chapel in the middle of Williams Street. Withered vines crawled over its walls and gray stones were strewn everywhere.

Inside the chapel, feces and debris intertwined amidst the rocks and dead grass.

In the half-collapsed corner, a middle-aged man, wearing black tights, was moving stones that hid the entrance to a cave. He carefully and excitedly went into the tunnel, carrying his digging tools, lighting tools, and earth basket.

His hair was gray at the temples, and his eyes were puffy. He was Baronet Rafter Pound, who was considered mentally ill by the outside world, but he was secretly a descendant of the Tudor family of the Fourth Epoch.

This prodigy, who was always entangled with high-class call-girls, had a serious expression on his face, and his eyes were bright. It was impossible to find any signs of him being addicted to drinking and sex.

He pushed himself up on his elbows and rapidly crawled down the slope, as though the end of the tunnel hid the greatest and only hope of his life.

Not long after, he touched the wet mud and cold stone in front of him.

This didn't extinguish Rafter Pound's enthusiasm, he repeated motions that he was extremely proficient with after having recently gained the experience.

As he was digging, carrying, and moving things, an empty area appeared before him. It was a dark underground palace that was in front of him.

Rafter Pound's expression immediately became crazed with excitement. He quickly moved forward and grabbed the black iron badge.

The badge was a hand holding a scepter. Seeing this, Rafter Pound's eyes lit up as if they were on fire.

Just as he put the black iron badge on his chest, everything in front of him shattered. He was still in the narrow and irregular tunnel, with wet mud and ice-cold stones in front of him.

No, there was someone else there who was quietly "watching" him.

He had no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no eyebrows, and no ears!

Rafter Pound's pupils contracted. He could only feel a numbness rising along his spine from his waist down to the back of his head.

Without even thinking about it, he immediately threw away all his tools and frantically retreated.

His elbows smacked the ground, but he felt no pain despite having a mangled wound.

Finally, Rafter Pound left the tunnel and returned to the abandoned chapel.

Because of the loss of his lantern, he could only see the deep darkness and the dim "crimson" that shrouded the edges.

Suddenly, the withered vines that were crawling up the wall swayed like snakes. A figure walked out from the darkness.

She was wearing a Gothic regal dress and a black small soft hat, with a pale face to the point of being transparent, as well as pale blonde hair and blue eyes that didn't look human.

Rafter Pound almost shouted out loud. For such a woman to appear in an environment such as this was no different from a ghost story from folklore!

Tap! Tap! Tap!

He took a few steps back and almost tripped over a rock.

At that moment, he seemed to think of something, and he suppressed his horror in an instant, revealing an excited and hopeful expression.

"A-are you that evil spirit inside the underground palace?

"Yes, it must be you!"

Sir Pound, there seems to be a misunderstanding… Faceless Klein came out of the tunnel and stood in the shadows.

His and Sharron's original plan had been to scare Rafter Pound off, scaring him so badly that he would no longer dare to explore the underground ruins again. However, Rafter Pound's reaction was somewhat out of their expectations.

Sharron was silent for a second before tacitly asking, "What do you wish to say?"

Rafter Pound quietly exhaled, and he then curled his lips into a smile.

"After attempting for so many years, I believe you already understand that killing the descendants of the Tudor family won't help you break the seal.

"Only by working with me, who has the great Tudor Bloodline, can you hope to get out of this predicament that has lasted for more than two thousand years."

The Tudors knew about the existence of the evil spirit, but they still died in that room… Klein frowned as spoke before Sharron could. He imitated Sharron's ethereal voice.

"What took you until today to come here?"

This was a branch of the Faceless's Beyonder powers—to mimic the sound of a target. He could reproduce any voice as long as he heard it before!

Of course, Klein believed he couldn't repeat the ravings of the True Creator and the pleas of Mr. Door. This Beyonder power was still limited to the realm of ordinary people.

Sharron looked sideways at him but didn't expose him.

Rafter Pound didn't notice and chuckled.

"It's because the Dark Emperor has appeared.

"Fate tells me that the glory of the Blood Emperor will appear once again!"

Is there some logical connection? Klein had an inexplicable feeling that Rafter Pound was more like a madman than before.

He asked in Sharron's voice again, "Dark Emperor?"

"Haha." Rafter Pound laughed, "Yes, Hero Bandit Dark Emperor. He must be closely related to the real Dark Emperor!"

Why don't I know that? Klein felt amused.

He thought for a moment, then he stopped asking, giving up the right to ask questions.

Sharron, for some reason, remained silent.

Upon seeing this, Rafter Pound was overjoyed as he quickly asked, "So, what's your answer?"

"I refuse," Sharron replied emotionlessly.

Rafter suppressed his anxiety and tried to persuade her again.

At this moment, his eyes suddenly glazed over as he abruptly took a few steps to the side, arriving at a relatively intact stone wall.

This… Klein and Sharron noticed an abnormality at the same time. They responded in their own ways, one pulling out a revolver and pointing it at Rafter Pound, the other filling the ruined chapel with a crimson lunar brilliance.

Rafter Pound didn't even look at them. He faced the stone wall and slammed his head into it.

Thump! Thump! Thump!

He slammed his head three times in a row and fainted with blood dripping from his forehead.

Then he got up again, his eyes were bloodshot for some unknown reason.

Rafter Pound raised his right hand and wiped the blood from his forehead, covering his palm with blood.

He stuck out the tip of his tongue, licked the scarlet liquid, and said in an intoxicated manner, "A member of the Tudor bloodline sure is delicious; it's really intoxicating.

"It will allow my loathing to exceed its limits to the greatest extent, and it will help me temporarily expand the boundary of the seal."

Klein's muzzle was aimed at him as he asked in a stunned tone, "The evil spirit in the ruins?"

Blood trickled across Rafter Pound's face, and he laughed horribly.

"You guessed right.

"Before, I judged that you were weak and wanted to corrupt your mind and enter your dreams to tempt you into rescuing me. Who knows, heh heh, you're also a person with a secret."

Don't be so direct… Klein subconsciously glanced at Sharron, but he found nothing out of the ordinary about her.

"What do you want to do?" Klein asked directly.

The evil spirit sighed.

"I'm an innocent person who was harmed because of Alista Tudor's ambition. Due to the constraints of my corpse, I've been trapped in that underground ruin for nearly two thousand years.

"I hope that you can help me out of this predicament and allow me to become a free spirit. I swear, I won't involve innocent people."

After saying that, he looked at Sharron with his bloodshot eyes.

"You should be a Wraith from the Mutant pathway. The next stop is a critical point to becoming a demigod. I'm not sure if you have the Puppet potion formula, but I can help you obtain it. I can even be a part of your ritual. That is the reward I can promise you."

Puppet, Sequence 4 of the Mutant pathway is called Puppet? What a strange name… Klein muttered inwardly.

The evil spirit turned to look at him.

"You will similarly be rewarded.

"It's an object that can be considered mystical and precious, and because of some sort of attraction, its holder came to the underground palace and died by the side of the Tudor descendants.

"This is what it looks like."

As he spoke, the evil spirit spread open the palm of his hand, causing the crimson moonlight to form a scene.

Inside the picture, there was a normal looking tarot card. The image on it was completely different from the others. Sitting inside a chariot wasn't a king, but rather a male priest wearing a dark red robe.

The priest looked like Roselle Gustav!

This… A Card of Blasphemy! Klein's eyes instantly shifted. He saw that the starlight in the upper left corner had condensed into a line of text: "Sequence 0: Red Priest!"

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CHAPTER 457
INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE EVIL SPIRIT

Sequence 0, Red Priest… Which pathway's Sequence 0 is this?

I've learned the true name of another Sequence 0… Of course, the pretext is that the evil spirit isn't lying…

It said that the holder of the Red Priest card would seek out the underground ruins of the Tudor family due to some form of attraction, but they ended up dying in that room… This should be the law of convergence of Beyonder characteristics within the same pathway, right? No, Emperor Roselle had apparently mentioned that after advancing to become a High-Sequence Beyonder, possessing a corresponding Card of Blasphemy would allow them to subtly sense the Beyonder ingredients needed for subsequent Sequences… In other words, the room where the evil spirit is sealed has a demigod-ranked characteristic of the Red Priest' path of the divine hidden within… Perhaps, the evil spirit was a demigod of this pathway when it was still alive, and it might even be a little stronger…

Hmm… The subtle sensation provided by the Card of Blasphemy is probably a result of the law of convergence…

Klein suddenly thought of many things. He subconsciously turned his head to look at Sharron to see her reaction. By doing so, he could determine if she knew about the Card of Blasphemy and whether she understood the meaning of a Sequence 0.

However, there was no change in Sharron's nearly transparent face. It was as if the evil spirit had just shown an ordinary tarot card.

However, this actually implies something. When any Beyonder first come to learn of a Sequence 0, they will subconsciously think about what it represented… Perhaps only a Beyonder in the Spectator pathway can read the subtle body language of Miss Sharron… Klein sighed to himself.

Seeing that both of them were silent at the same time, the evil spirit gave Klein a deep glance, slowly making the projection of the Card of Blasphemy disappear.

It once again looked at Sharron with its bloodshot eyes and said with a low and hoarse laugh, "If you are unwilling to become a demigod of the Mutant pathway, then I can provide you with the Sequence 4 potion formula of the Abyss pathway. The temperance of desire and the flamboyance of malice has always been very congruous, isn't it?"

Sharron ignored the evil spirit's question and turned unhurriedly to Klein, leaving him to respond.

What the evil spirit means is that the Mutant pathway and the Abyss pathway are closely related pathways which are exchangeable at high Sequences… How the Rose School of Thought and the Blood Sanctify Sect act on the surface does seem very similar… Klein thought for two seconds and looked at the bloodied Rafter Pound.

"Then, how can your seal be removed?"

The evil spirit laughed and said, "Very simple. Find a direct descendant of the Sauron, Einhorn, and Medici family and obtain 10 milliliters of their blood, each. A little more is fine, but not less.

"Then mix them with holy water and pour them into my room.

"This way, the seal will be lifted."

It's a very simple and strange method. Even in the field of mysticism, it's rare… Why must they be direct descendants of the Sauron, Einhorn, and Medici families? I have never heard of the last one. Sauron is the former royal family of Intis, and Einhorn is the royal family of the Feysac Empire. Both of them were loyal to the Trunsoest Empire, the Angel Family of the Fourth Epoch, and they were the final winners. However, Loen's Augustus and Feynapotter's Castiya families also meet the same conditions… Oh right, the Sauron and Einhorn family have one more thing in common, and that is their possession of the Hunter pathway!

Is this the reason for them being chosen? Eh… Taking the situation from before into context, the Hunter pathway is equal to the Red Priest pathway?

As he made a guess, Klein didn't conceal his doubts.

"I know about the Sauron and Einhorn families, but I've never heard of the Medici family."

"Very normal. They often enjoy hiding in the shadows. They are corrupted angels and have established an extremely secretive organization," the evil spirit said with a contemptuous tone. "That organization is known as Rose Redemption."

This name is very familiar… That's right, inside the abandoned temple of the True Creator that was recently found by the City of Silver, there is something similar written on a corner of a mural. They suspect that it's the name of the city or the creator of the temple… Now, from the looks of it, this symbolizes an extremely secretive organization that was founded by corrupted angels… They believe in the True Creator? What is their relationship with the Aurora Order? Klein pondered for a moment and said, "It's related to the True Creator?"

The evil spirit was silent for two seconds before asking in a low voice, "You know about Rose Redemption?"

"I heard it by chance," Klein spoke the absolute truth.

The evil spirit thought for a moment, then it suddenly said with a smile, "You have more secrets than I thought."

Can we not talk about such things? Klein held himself back from watching Sharron's response as he wore an unperturbed look.

The evil spirit's gaze swept across the two and laughed.

"Rose Redemption has a close relationship with the birth of the True Creator. It's impossible for you to imagine that certain people were once members of Rose Redemption, but they have since left it.

"As long as you find an organization that believes in the True Creator and trace it to the very end, then there will be a chance of you coming into contact with Rose Redemption."

It sounds a little like the Twilight Hermit Order, with one being the front side while the other the is back side… Klein made an intuitive guess.

Seeing that the evil spirit had no intention of giving an in-depth introduction to Rose Redemption, he laughed and said, "Do you think we can complete something like that with our strengths?"

The evil spirit was silent for a few seconds before saying, "Maybe you guys can try your luck in Binxi Town."

"Binxi Town? Where's that?" Despite Klein's repeated questioning, the evil spirit refused to reveal anything else.

Faced with this situation, Klein could only switch to asking, "During the Fourth Epoch, were the Dark Emperor, Blood Emperor, and Night Emperor fighting for the position of Sequence 0?"

When the evil spirit heard this, it was stunned for a moment before it smiled and said, "It was once was the case, but not later. It wasn't the case after Alista Tudor went mad."

"Alista Tudor was that Blood Emperor?" Klein sought confirmation.

The evil spirit nodded.

"Yes, there has only been one Blood Emperor, that lunatic, Alista Tudor. Heh heh. The descendants of the Tudor family have all inherited the madness of that bloodline. They're usually crafty, devious, careful, and cautious, but at critical moments, they can become reckless and not consider the repercussions." The evil spirit pointed at Rafter Pound's face and said, "He is an example. However, after this lesson, he will definitely become more normal for a long period of time… I've no idea if he's the last Tudor. Alista left quite a number of good things which require the blood of his descendants in order to gain access to them. It's best that you don't kill him now."

The evil spirit paused and chuckled softly.

"Alright, after you help me remove the seal, I will tell you all the stories I have experienced—No, a more accurate description is the history I've experienced."

Having said that, Rafter Pound's eyes suddenly lost focus.

His body twitched a few times before limply collapsing to the ground.

Sharron silently watched this scene before she suddenly took a step forward.

Whoosh!

The wind howled as the dirt and rocks on the ground began to move before falling into the underground tunnel and sealing off the entrance.

After that was done, Klein and Sharron left Williams Street and took a detour to another block in the silent darkness.

When Klein boarded the rental carriage, Sharron's figure appeared, and she sat across from him.

She looked unblinkingly at Klein as she asked with her hoarse and ethereal voice, "Will you help it lift its seal?"

"No." Klein didn't hesitate to reply, and then he asked, "What about you?"

Sharron shook her head, indicating that she wouldn't either.

Klein heaved a sigh of relief as he smiled.

"It's already been dead for about two thousand years, and right now, it's just a remnant of an evil spirit. Dispersing or returning to the spirit world is supposed to be its end. My plan is that once we become High-Sequence Beyonders, we can team up and eliminate it, giving it true deliverance."

Although the Red Priest card, the hidden history of the Fourth Epoch, and the evil spirit's promised rewards were tempting, Klein had no confidence in it at all.

In his mind, he would always recall the scene of the evil spirit's corpse sitting on a high back chair with its head lowered. He would also remember how the other party's face would be covered in traces of decay when he raised his head.

Sharron tersely acknowledged, giving the necessary response.

*Aren't you supposed to ask me why I'm so confident in becoming a High-Sequence Beyonder? *Klein couldn't help but lampoon.

And the answer to that question was that people needed to have dreams.

Klein no longer bothered with the topic and switched to asking, "Is the Wraith's corresponding Sequence 4 really Puppet?"

Sharron nodded.

"Do you have the potion formula or Beyonder ingredients?" Klein asked in thought.

Sharron shook her head.

Klein let out a soft chuckle.

"I'll help you keep an eye out for it in my circle."

Without changing her tone, Sharron said without changing her tone, "Thank you."

Klein looked out of the window and muttered to himself, "I'm going to the south for a holiday."

At this point, he said with a smile, as if he were speaking to a Lawyer Jurgen, "Let me wish you and Maric a happy new year in advance."

Sharron was silent for two seconds, then she pursed her lips and replied in a fleeting voice, "Happy New Year."

Her figure gradually faded and disappeared from the carriage…

…

Looking at the little boy behind the altar and hearing his slightly hoarse and tender voice, Derrick felt as if he was facing the most terrifying monster. He almost performed a downward cleave with the Axe of Hurricane in his hand.

From what he knew, a person who could survive in the pure darkness for so long was definitely not human. Even if he was one before, it definitely wouldn't be one after that long!

Demon Hunter Colin's eyes seemed to brighten a little. He tightened his grip on his sword and asked in a calm voice, "What are you doing here?"

The yellow-haired boy who called himself Jack had a pained expression as he replied, "We're looking for the holy residence of the Lord."

"The holy residence of the Lord?" Colin pressed.

"Right." The little boy Jack turned his head and looked at the pitch-black cross and the statue of the overturned man. "They told me that as long as I go in the direction that the Lord's eyes look in, then I will be able to reach his holy residence."

"They? You still have companions?" Colin's eyes moved one full revolution as if he were a monster, taking in the surroundings. "Where are they?"

Hearing this question, the little boy Jack was stunned for a moment.

Suddenly, he held his throat, and with a twisted, blank look on his face, he said, "I'm so hungry…

"So hungry…”

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CHAPTER 458
AN ANCIENT SANGUINE

"So hungry…”

Amidst his trancelike words, Jack raised his head and looked at Joshua, who was wearing a pair of scarlet red gloves.

"So hungry…”

His mouth opened in an instant, reaching straight to his ears, revealing his neat white teeth and thick saliva that was constantly gushing out of his mouth.

At the same time, he threw himself forward towards Joshua. He was so fast that he left behind an afterimage on the ground.

Although Joshua was on high alert, he wasn't able to react in time.

Before he could even make out what was happening, the little boy, Jack, had already pounced in front of him.

Thump!

The yellow-haired figure seemed to slam into an invisible wall, stopping only a step away from Joshua.

Jack suspended himself in midair as a reddish glow from the darkness emerged from his body and started to corrode the transparent barrier that was denying him entry.

Behind Joshua and Derrick, Demon Hunter Colin had already fallen to one knee at some point. He had stabbed his sword, smeared with a silver ointment, into the ground.

Soon after, the area around the altar instantly brightened, as if it was the purest ray of the light of dawn.

Colin suddenly drew his sword, and his figure strangely split apart, turning into a series of afterimages that spread out around the altar.

Every single figure raised the sword in their hands at the same time and, combined with the light of dawn in the vicinity, released a bright glow.

Sou! Sou! Sou!

One sword after another was thrust forward as the light of dawn converged towards Jack from all directions, encircling him in the middle.

Under the brilliance of the rising sun, the black and red figures quickly evaporated, disappearing under the storm-like barrage of attacks.

In the underground hall where the altar was located, the brilliance became abnormally bright, so bright that Derrick Berg couldn't help but close his eyes.

With a sudden jolt, he suddenly woke up from his slumber and saw a bonfire quietly burning in front of him and his teammates, who were diligently guarding the camp.

Demon Hunter Colin, who was sitting cross-legged beside a stone pillar, opened his eyes and said in a deep voice, "We will set off after 50 rounds of lightning."

Upon hearing this, Derrick looked up at the sky and found that the frequency of lightning hadn't significantly increased. Darkness remained the ruler of this land.

When he thought of the city he was about to arrive at and the temple of the Fallen Creator, he couldn't help but feel slightly nervous.

After spending some time calming himself down, Derrick quickly ate his food and recovered his combat-ready state.

I wonder what will happen in that temple… Holding the Axe of Hurricane, he came to the middle of the group.

Within the campsite, lanterns that were covered with a thin layer of animal hide were being lit one after another.

…

15 Minsk Street.

Klein heated the water, adjusted the temperature, and took a comfortable bath.

With the languidness after a bath, he took four steps counterclockwise and went above the gray fog. He intended to use divination to make a confirmation about the evil spirit's matter.

In the silence of the ancient palace, Klein leaned back in his chair and began to seriously consider which divination method to choose and how to design the divination statement. It had to conform to the principles of mysticism, it shouldn't involve subdivision or elimination, and it had to contain sufficient information.

After a short period of silence, Klein leaned forward and wrote down what he wanted to confirm: "The evil spirit in the ruins harbors strong malice towards Sharron and me."

He undid the spirit pendulum on his left wrist, gripped it with one hand, and began entering Cogitation.

After muttering to himself for a while, he opened his eyes and looked forward.

This time, the topaz pendant was wildly rotating clockwise!

This meant that the evil spirit's malice was stronger than Klein had imagined!

*At that time, there was nothing abnormal about the spiritual intuition we had… That evil spirit is also a powerhouse that's good at interfering with divination and prophecy… Heh heh, he definitely wouldn't have imagined that one of us has the temperance to resist desire, preventing her from being blinded by greed, while the other has experienced too many things to know what it means to "ask a tiger for its skin"…*With a sigh, Klein returned to the real world and laid down on his bed.

Unfortunately, the heat brought by the Sun Brooch is only a psychological feeling and can't warm the bed… Before he fell asleep, he closed his eyes and thought with regret.

…

South of the Bridge, Rose Street, Harvest Church.

After Emlyn White wiped the last chair, he straightened up and eagerly said to Father Utravsky, "I've finished doing today's chores!"

*Damn old man, don't you suddenly get ideas of getting me to copy the Holy Bible! *Emlyn prayed inwardly.

The object of his prayer had unwittingly changed from the moon to Earth Mother.

Father Utravsky stood there, making the vampire look like a child.

He smiled and said, "Recently, you've been able to experience the joy and relaxation of working with dedication and gratitude. Go back and quietly feel the pulse of life and the pure joy that comes from it."

"I haven't!" Emlyn denied on reflex.

Without saying anything, Father Utravsky looked at him with a kind smile, turned and took a seat, and then began his nightly prayer.

Emlyn White's lips quivered as he wanted to refute, but in the end, he failed to say anything. He silently left the Harvest Church and habitually closed the door.

When he returned to his current residence, he found that the house was empty. Both his parents had disappeared without a trace.

It was only after witnessing this scene that he remembered that there was going to be a Sanguine gathering in the Backlund area tonight.

"Those fellows are really disgraceful. As noble Sanguine, they should sleep in coffins or stay in their own rooms. Why are they mimicking humans and holding all kinds of gatherings? There's even dancing!" Emlyn muttered contemptuously.

As he spoke, he touched his belly and swallowed a mouthful of saliva before deciding to change into some clothes to attend the gathering.

"The Odora family sure is enviable. They actually have a pure human partner who runs several hospitals and has fresh blood every day. They can drink as much as they want, anytime they want." Emlyn put on his black top hat and quickly walked out of the house.

West Borough, in a brightly lit villa.

Emlyn picked up a glass with scarlet liquid and hungrily took a gulp of it.

*It really has been pre-selected… *He half closed his eyes, sighing in praise from the bottom of his heart.

At this moment, on the dance floor, handsome men and beautiful women were dancing, twirling and taking slow steps with each other under the romantic music.

"What's the point of all of this?" Emlyn stood at the edge of the railing on the second floor, looking down at his kinsmen.

As the largest city in the world, Backlund had many vampires living in it. They hid in all walks of life and had completely integrated into human society.

As for those who were unable to control their own destructive urges and bloodlust, they were either sent to castles deep in the mountains or were dealt with in advance to prevent the Nighthawks or other official Beyonder organizations from finding clues.

As he looked at his fellow kinsmen, who were growing more spirited as the night went on, Emlyn increasingly felt like there was nothing in common between him and them.

At that moment, the host of the banquet tonight, Cosmi Odora walked over with a wine cup in hand. Smiling, he asked, "Do you like tonight's 'wine?'"

"Of course, its owner is young enough and possesses great vitality." Emlyn straightened his back and assumed a noble posture.

Based on appearances, Cosmi Odora was a very gracious middle-aged gentleman, but Emlyn knew that he was over two hundred years old. He had once seen Intis under the rule of Emperor Roselle, and then he moved to Loen because he had "lived" for too long and feared that his neighbors would discover something was wrong about him.

Upon hearing Emlyn's praise, he smiled and said, "Yes, its owner is a young lady who was stabbed by a thief and nearly lost her life. Fortunately, she met me, and this is the price she needs to pay for her recovery.

"You can have a taste of the wine over there, as well as the wine over there. The owners are from Balam and Feynapotter respectively. They have different flavors."

"Feynapotter? Mother Goddess, the humans there love chili so much that their blood has a spiciness that I can't stand. Mother Goddess…" As he spoke, Emlyn suddenly paused, his expression instantly turning blank.

The corner of Cosmi's mouth twitched, and he pretended not to hear anything.

In the awkward silence, he cleared his throat and said, "Emlyn, that's just your imagination. By the way, my grandfather wishes to meet you."

"Your grandfather?" Emlyn was startled for a moment, but he then immediately widened his eyes. "Lord Nibbs?"

Nibbs Odora was a powerful Sanguine who had been active in the Fourth Epoch, but the times had corroded his life and forced him to lie in a cold coffin for extended periods of time.

Cosmi nodded solemnly.

"Yes."

With that, he turned and walked to another staircase on the second floor, not considering the possibility that Emlyn might refuse him.

Emlyn followed, a little nervous and uneasy, thinking about the purpose of Lord Nibbs's summons.

Has he finally understood that the honor of the Sanguine is more important and has decided to help me get rid of Father Utravsky's psychological cue? As he walked, Emlyn White developed a strong sense of hope.

Following the stairs to the underground area, Emlyn White passed through a few secret doors and entered a large gray hall.

In the center of the hall was a heavy coffin made of black iron, engraved with symbols and magic labels.

After Cosmi Odora reported Emlyn's arrival, a heavy and aged voice slowly came out from the coffin.

"Emlyn White, do you know why I summoned you?"

"Honorable Lord Nibbs, I imagine that you are planning on helping me remove the psychological cue," Emlyn responded without hesitation.

Silence reigned in the underground hall for a few seconds. Then, Nibbs Odora, who was lying in the coffin, chuckled and said, "That's one of the purposes, but it won't be me helping you.

"I just woke up from a long dream because I received a revelation from the Ancestor."

"Ancestor? 'Sh-She' has awakened?" It wasn't Emlyn who exclaimed in surprise, but Cosmi Odora.

After the Cataclysm, doesn't the Ancestor only respond to important matters? Emlyn listened in bewilderment.

"No, not yet," Nibbs said in a heavy voice. "The Ancestor told me that the apocalypse is near and that we must prepare for it, and you, Emlyn White, are one of the key elements in the Ancestor's revelation."

"Apocalypse?" Cosmi asked in surprise.

But Emlyn only had one thought.

I, Emlyn White, was actually mentioned by the Ancestor! I am a key element for the Sanguine's survival of the apocalypse!

Nibbs ignored his grandson's question and continued, "Emlyn White, I'll hand you a task right now."

"Please speak." Emlyn felt that he was being too modest. Even after hearing what had just been said, he didn't show any arrogance in front of Lord Nibbs.

Nibbs Odora solemnly said, "Find a chance to pray to The Fool."

"Ah?" Emlyn suspected he had heard wrongly.

Nibbs lowered his voice and added, "The Fool whose honorific name has only recently been spread."

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CHAPTER 459
LETTING A CHANCE SLIP

Although I have always had the urge to pray to The Fool to get rid of the psychological cue that Father Utravsky gave me, I also know, very clearly, that it's dangerous to recite the honorific name of an unknown being. Not all hidden existences will start with bait and slowly provide guidance. In such matters, "They" are often like sharks in the sea, who would go mad and lurch forward once they smell blood…

But now… Lord Nibbs, no—what does the Ancestor want?

Emlyn White said, finding it rather ridiculous, "It will be very, very, very dangerous."

Inside the black iron coffin, Nibbs Odora replied with an aged voice, "Yes, under normal circumstances.

"But not all hidden existences are filled with malice. Among 'Them,' they will similarly abide to rules and enjoy transactions. For example, the seven pure lights of the spirit world.

"Since the Ancestor has given such a revelation, it means that the danger that The Fool can bring is not too serious, or even none.

"And during this entire process, I will always be by your side to protect you.

"Don't you want to get rid of the psychological cue? Have you already become a believer of Earth Mother and abandoned the moon?"

"No, I haven't!" Emlyn frantically denied.

After a moment of silence, he gritted his teeth and said, "I wish to have a few days to think it over."

"Alright, no problem. I believe that you will make a choice that suits your noble identity as a member of the Sanguine." Inside the coffin, Nibbs's voice turned soft as he smiled and comforted him.

After sending Emlyn White back to the second floor, Cosmi Odora once again returned to the dark and gloomy underground hall, and he asked with confusion and doubt, "Grandfather, how could the revelation given by the Ancestor involve Emlyn White? He's just a weak member of the Sanguine who only recently reached adulthood."

Nibbs's voice came through the thick black metal coffin lid and reverberated in the air.

"No, the revelation provided by the Ancestor never included Emlyn White.

"'She' only showed a scene of the dawn of the apocalypse, depicting the erosion of the crimson moon, as well as mentioning The Fool and the corresponding honorific name.

"During this process, no Sanguine appeared. The mention of the key element was just my way of convincing Emlyn White.

"However, being able to take risks for the future of the Sanguine can also be considered a key element."

Cosmi was first enlightened before he had another question.

"Why did you choose Emlyn White? What's so special about him?"

Nibbs Odora suddenly laughed.

"Hasn't he been clamoring about praying to The Fool all this time? Didn't he think that we weren't putting too much weight on his problem, that we aren't willing to antagonize Bishop Utravsky, so he was trying to find other help?

"I'm just fulfilling his wish."

For a long time, Cosmi was speechless.

Emlyn White stood at the railing of the second floor, looked down at his tireless kinsmen, and nervously took a sip of his "wine."

Up to this day, I haven't heard of any terrible outcome for people who prayed to The Fool… Perhaps it's just as Lord Nibbs said, The Fool is just like the seven pure lights in the spirit world, a hidden existence that maintains order and is warm-hearted… Wait a minute, what are the seven pure lights in the spirit world? Why haven't I ever heard of them before? They seem to be on the side of good? I wonder if this will be any help to me… In short, The Fool isn't necessarily dangerous, and there is Lord Nibbs protecting me… Maybe I can take advantage of this opportunity to get rid of the psychological cue… Emlyn consoled himself with fear and anticipation.

…

Monday morning. Cherwood Borough, 15 Minsk Street.

Klein squatted in front of the toilet, holding a brush and carefully cleaning the dirt inside it.

According to his schedule, after completing his "visits" on Saturday and Sunday, he decided to take a day off and wait until tomorrow to report back to Prince Edessak about the final results and hand over the assignment. But during what should've been his relaxation time, he found the house a little too messy and dirty.

It was only when he saw this that he remembered that the cleaning of the house had been done twice a week through the temporary employment of the landlady's maid next door.

As the Sammers had gone on holiday to Seville City in Desi Bay, one of the maids had gone along with them, while another had returned to the countryside after receiving a year-end bonus. 15 Minsk Street, where he lived, hadn't been cleaned by anyone for quite some time.

Klein had planned to put up with it for two days since he was "leaving" Backlund, but in his free time, he didn't dare to take the time to head to the Quelaag Club to have fun. He was afraid of infuriating Prince Edessak, so he could only stay home. Hence, seeing the things that irked him, he changed into his old clothes and began spring cleaning before the new year.

He went on to scrub the toilet, wash the bathtub, wipe the windows, mop the floors, clean his equipment, and wash clothes… Klein busied himself from eight to eleven before barely completing his desired cleanup.

Of course, he only did it perfunctorily without that much attention to detail.

Sometimes, renting too big a house isn't a good thing… Klein washed his hands and wiped his face with a towel.

Walking out of the bathroom and looking at the clean and tidy living room and dining room, and watching the sunlight pierce through the clouds and shine through the transparent glass window, showering golden spots in his house, he had a strange sense of accomplishment. He felt a lot happier.

Time to reward myself for lunch. I'll find a good restaurant… Klein returned to the second floor and changed his clothes.

As he leafed through the papers, waiting for lunchtime, the doorbell rang.

"It's almost the new year, and there are still people coming to entrust me with missions?" As he rose and walked to the door, Klein made up his mind

to decline.

Although he only had 34 pounds left in cash, in order to get out of the royal strife, he had to "go on vacation" to the south as soon as possible. He could no longer accept assignments.

To his surprise, the visitor wasn't a stranger, but the old butler of Prince Edessak.

The old butler was wearing a well-cut tuxedo. He saluted without losing his dignity, and said, "Detective Moriarty, His Highness, the Prince, is waiting for you in the carriage at the end of the street. He wishes to know the progress of your investigations."

So impatient? Alright, that saves me the trouble of going all the way to Red Rose Manor tomorrow… Klein quickly reorganized what he had thought of last night and calmly replied, "Alright."

He was about to remove his hat from the coat rack when he felt a sudden ache in his stomach, a pain that required him to visit the toilet.

After enduring for a while, he realized that he couldn't hold it in any longer and apologetically said to the old butler, "I'm very sorry. I'll need to use the bathroom first. My stomach isn't feeling well."

The old butler didn't show any abnormal expression.

"That's your freedom."

As he discharged one wave after another of bliss, clearing away the remnants in his stomach, Klein washed his hands and returned to the hall.

At that moment, he noticed that the old butler was no longer around. The one waiting outside was the maid with curly brown hair.

"His Highness requested me to apologize to you; he still has matters to attend to and cannot wait for too long. Please go to Red Rose Manor tomorrow or the afternoon of the day after tomorrow." The maid bowed meticulously.

It hasn't even been ten minutes, and I'd already done it as fast as I could… Usually, I can continue on for quite a while if I have newspapers… Klein smiled.

"No problem."

After receiving a response, the maid who had completed her mission immediately felt a weight off her chest. She giggled and said, "Detective Moriarty, you missed that lady again."

"Huh?" Klein was at a loss.

The maid lowered her voice and said, "This time, the young lady came with His Highness. She was the one who suggested taking a detour to meet you."

In the end, I missed her because of my stomachache? Something isn't right… Klein frowned slightly.

…

In a room padded with a thick and soft carpet.

A quill that was being held came to a pause and stopped writing.

In the open notebook beneath it, there were lines of text and marks of scribbled out text:

(Scribbles)

"Target attempted to escape control, but unfortunately, Detective Sherlock Moriarty leaves before she heads downstairs."

…

"The target influenced the surrounding maids, but Prince Edessak's butler, Funkel, chanced upon the problem and dealt with it."

…

(Scribbles)

"The target went off track once again. She participated in Talim's funeral on behalf of Prince Edessak. However, having quickly recovered to her normal state, she realized that she was unable to identify Sherlock Moriarty, and she could only let a chance slip."

…

"Sherlock Moriarty went to Red Rose Manor to investigate, but the timing wasn't right, and the target happened to be riding horses on the golf course."

…

(Scribbles)

"The target, once again, triumphed over the arrangement, encouraging Prince Edessak to visit Detective Sherlock Moriarty. Unfortunately, Sherlock Moriarty happened to have a stomachache, ended up staying in the bathroom for seven minutes and forty-five seconds, and the Prince couldn't afford to wait."

…

His facial features were like a sculpture, but the middle-aged man who was blinded in one eye put down his quill and looked at a woman.

"What exactly did you put on her body? Breaking through the restrictions time and time again will create big problems."

The woman laughed in a low voice and said, "It was just an accident. Don't worry, there won't be any problems."

As she spoke, she pulled back her hair, revealing her long, white neck.

After that, she slowly applied various things to her face, making her look even more alluring.

Seeing that she was putting on her clothes and accessories, the dark golden-haired middle-aged man frowned and asked, "Where are you going?"

The woman didn't directly answer and said with a smile, "Be careful of the quill in your hand, you almost exchanged bodies with someone the last time."

"You don't need to remind me," the middle-aged man with deep blue eyes to the point of being black said with a straight face.

The woman tightened her belt to make herself look thinner, then she lazily stretched and yawned while covering her mouth.

"I'm going to pay a visit to Mr. A of the Aurora Order.

"I hope he's as crazy as the rumors say."

As she spoke, the expression of the blind middle-aged man suddenly sank. It was because that ordinary quill had begun to write on its own, as though an invisible hand was holding onto it.

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CHAPTER 460
CYCLIC EXPLORATIONS

Above the gray fog, the ancient temple-like building stood quietly.

After noticing some abnormalities in the series of coincidences, Klein entered the mysterious space after lunch, in an attempt to confirm a guess in his mind.

He picked up a fountain pen he conjured, paused for two seconds, and then wrote: "I am involved in a series of coincidences created by Sealed Artifact 0-08."

Putting down the dark red pen, Klein held the silver chain in his left hand and began his divination.

Finally, he opened his eyes and looked at the spirit pendulum just inches away from him.

The topaz pendant stood still without any rotations.

This meant that the divination had failed!

Divination cannot be completed—possibly due to not fulfilling sufficient conditions, or it could be because 0-08 is resisting it… In both cases, a similar result would occur… Klein changed his statement and tried to direct it at different targets, but all of them failed.

He tapped the edge of the long mottled table with his finger, hesitating on whether he should go to Red Rose Manor the day after tomorrow.

If there's no 0-08 or a similar power to arrange these matters, then my sudden escape will definitely raise Prince Edessak's suspicion. No, my escape might not be successful. Prince Edessak's men live next door… Of course, since I'm already a Faceless, it's easy for me to find a chance to escape when I'm out, but is there a need to go this far?

Tomorrow afternoon, I'll be able to "leave" Backlund without attracting too much attention by honestly seeking an audience with Prince Edessak and normally handing over the mission. His Highness will likely not force me, an unaffiliated Beyonder, to accomplish too difficult a task…

If there really is a Sealed Artifact or demigod like 0-08 influencing the recent events, then from my past experience, I should just be a side character who mistakenly entered the stage and haven't received enough attention. In this case, escaping is tantamount to telling the other party that I have detected your presence! I'm highly problematic!

In this way, relying on my Faceless powers wouldn't necessarily allow me to escape the "attention" that has locked onto me…

The best method would be to calmly go to the Red Rose Manor and go through the normal procedures to exit the stage. After graciously bowing from the curtain call, I'll fade away from the "attention" of the unknown party…

After combining the two elements, Klein finally decided to pretend that he hadn't discovered anything and to "leave" Backlund according to plan.

…

The bonfire in the campsite was burning with flames, and there was someone standing guard inside the campsite the entire time.

Derrick Berg leaned against a stone pillar and slept to recover his strength.

At this moment, he was dreaming of the endless grayish-white fog, an ancient chair situated at the highest point in the center, as well as the indifferent figure sitting on that chair, overlooking everything.

Mr. Fool… Derrick said the name in a chanting manner in his mind.

Following that, he heard The Fool's voice: "Prepare for the gathering."

Yes, Mr. Fool. Derrick answered silently and began counting his heartbeats.

His eyes never opened, as if everything that had just happened was just a prelude to a dream.

*There's still quite a bit of time before we set off. There's enough time to attend the Tarot Gathering… *he thought with relief.

He originally imagined that he, who had joined the exploratory team, would miss this gathering.

After a thousand heartbeats, Derrick waited a little longer before he felt himself entering that quiet and serene divine hall.

The moment he opened his eyes, scenes flashed through his mind. It was as if an external force had instantly injected all his lost memories into his head once again.

The scenes were: crumbling city walls; buildings crisscrossed with white and blue; the temple of the Fallen Creator with a similar architectural style as the City of Silver; murals detailing the approaching apocalypse and the Fallen Creator's protection of the remaining humans from the six great evil gods; the beautiful and dangerous "mushrooms;" and Jack, the eerie pale yellow-haired boy of unknown origins.

These kinds of scenes had repeated over and over again for a total of five times, but each time there was a slight difference in the details.

The first time, outside the Fallen Creator's Temple, all of the animal hide lanterns had been extinguished, nearly causing a tragedy. The second time, someone lost control of themselves and almost swallowed a "mushroom," fortunately, Chief Colin stopped them in time. The third time, the little boy, Jack, told a story, which was that he and his father had been searching for the Creator's holy residence in the endless ocean, and they ended up encountering a huge storm. The fourth time, Joshua was severely injured by Jack who had mutated without any warning. The fifth time, the temple completely collapsed, blocking the exit of the underground area.

And all of these occurrences ended with Demon Hunter Colin killing the little boy, Jack, and then started off with their rest in the camp, preparing to enter the ruined city. The beginning and end were connected as it repeated in a cycle.

We've explored the temple five times… We have been living through this experience all this time, and there is no way to truly end it! The more Derrick understood his sudden new memories, the more frightened and terrified he became.

Audrey, who was sitting on the other side of the long bronze table, originally wanted to greet Mr. Fool and the others with a cheerful and light voice as usual. However, when she glanced over, she immediately noticed that Little Sun's mood wasn't right. She immediately asked, "Mr. Sun, did something happen? Has the exploration of the True, uh—Fallen Creator's temple not gone smoothly?"

Derrick seemed to have grabbed onto hope as he hurriedly described the rough situation once. When he was done, he said, "After that little boy was dealt with by His Excellency, we all closed our eyes and woke up in the campsite outside the city in preparation to begin a brand new exploration. We no longer had any memories from before.

"This process has been repeated five times, with only the details being slightly different.

"If it wasn't for Mr. Fool's alerting me to this, then I wouldn't have even known that I've been living a recurring life all this time."

He took it for granted that the extra memories from his arrival above the gray fog were the result of Mr. Fool's reminder. He stood up and gave a solemn salute to the blurry figure seated at the head of the long bronze table.

I only understood the situation after listening to your description… Klein was still in a daze.

He maintained his original posture and lightly nodded his head in response.

In a situation where the reasons are unknown, a superior wouldn't so easily express his opinion, so I can't rashly open my mouth… Klein secretly reviewed what he had learned from his past life as a keyboard warrior.

Seeing that Mr. Fool seemed to be an imperturbable ancient wall, Derrick felt a lot more at ease and felt that the matter could finally be resolved.

He turned to look at The Hanged Man, The World, Justice, and The Magician, and he sincerely asked, "Do you know the root of the problem? How can this be resolved?"

The zealous Audrey instinctively wanted to answer, but she found herself without a clue or even a guess.

Fors was in a similar state as she was.

Filled with rich knowledge from Earth and having read many novels of being stuck in the same day, Klein originally wanted to control The World to give out ideas to give everyone some inspiration to consider regarding the matter, but after thinking about it carefully, he chose to stay low-key and prepared to observe first.

After listening to The Sun's description, Alger remained silent for a long time. At this moment, he said in a measured tone, "I can only think of two possibilities. First, you have encountered a Nightmare or hallucinatory power at a level that exceeds a demigod. After regaining your memories with Mr. Fool's help, you should be able to immediately detect something amiss once you return to the real world. That way, the problem will easily be resolved.

"Second, you were forced to or you proactively entered a strange space or state at a particular node where time is controlled to flow in a certain manner, but the time is fixed within a certain range which is cyclical and the continuation is balanced, that is to say, it is relatively static.

"In this situation, there aren't many ways to end the cycle. Either there is an external force that can forcefully break the balance, or you find the key point that connects the distortion of time."

An external force that can forcefully break the balance? Upon hearing this, Audrey, Fors, and Derrick all subconsciously glanced at the calm and leisurely Mr. Fool sitting at the end of the long bronze table.

*No, I can't always seek Mr. Fool's help… By not saying anything directly, "He" probably wishes to test my ability at dealing with such matters… *After a moment of thought, he said, "Mr. Hanged Man, let's assume the second situation. In your opinion, what do you think is the key point that connects the distortion of time?"

Without waiting for The Hanged Man to respond, Audrey guessed with interest, "That little boy Jack?

"You can't kill him when you're facing him?"

Alger nodded.

"That's a possibility."

He hesitated for a moment before saying, "The Sun's description of Jack and his father reminds me of a particular incident."

He turned to look at Miss Justice.

"Didn't I once mention that I was pursuing a Listener of the Aurora Order at sea? The goal for his voyage was to seek the True Creator's holy residence."

Audrey carefully recalled and said without any strong confirmation, "That seems to be the case."

Alger immediately said with a deep voice, "That Listener also brought his son, and the son's age is very close to The Sun's description of Jack."

"Are you saying that Jack went from your world to the vicinity of the City of Silver?" Derrick asked, stunned.

After a short period of settling down, he inwardly felt an indescribable sense of happiness.

This means that the City of Silver hasn't been completely sealed off yet. There's still a chance to connect with the normal world where The Hanged Man and Justice are from!

"I can only say that it is possible." The Hanged Man couldn't give an affirmative answer.

He thought for a moment and suggested, "You can find a chance to bring up the Sonia Sea, the Loen Kingdom, and the port city in front of Jack. Perhaps there will be a different reaction, but of course, try to avoid doing so in front of the Chief of your City of Silver as much as possible.

"Also, the key point doesn't necessarily lie with Jack. We have to consider other possibilities as well. You should tell us the specifics, such as the details of the mural, and maybe we can find something useful."

At this point, Alger began to look forward to receiving information.

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CHAPTER 461
THE KIND AND ENTHUSIASTIC HANGED MAN

Unlike the past, Derrick was clearly smarter. He didn't clumsily rely only on words to provide a description.

After receiving Mr. Fool's permission, he conjured a series of scenes from the memories that he could recall. He showed the exploratory process and the points he found important to The Hanged Man, Justice, The Magician, and The World in a fragmented fashion, and then he included some explanations for them.

The walls that had collapsed in the darkness, the streets that passed through the destroyed buildings, the stone pillar-propped white and blue ancient temple that was covered in dust under the light of the animal hide lantern, the statue that hung upside down from a pitch-black cross, the series of murals depicting the Fallen Creator who suffered from the sin in place of humanity, the exceptionally alluring "mushrooms," the statue at the altar that had strangely opened its eyes, and the young yellow-haired Jack who had been hiding in the back—all these scenes took shape and were reflected in the eyes of the Tarot Club members in the most direct and realistic manner.

The gloomy and dark tone, the sense of crisis with every step that was taken, and the bizarre development that The Sun was experiencing made Audrey rather excited. She became extremely interested in what he was saying.

This is the situation around the City of Silver… It's more attractive than any novel I've ever read… This is the charm of mystery, uncertainty, and terror combined… Of course, to the humans who live there, this isn't a good thing… Audrey's thoughts were in disarray. She wanted nothing more than to immediately become a powerhouse at the level of a demigod and venture into that region ruled by darkness and storms.

Klein watched and sighed emotionally.

He was sighing because it truly wasn't easy for the City of Silver to last all this time in such an environment. He sighed because Little Sun still wasn't smart enough and had no experience. Otherwise, he would've been able to completely present the events that happened in the form of a movie or documentary. It would certainly be exciting and attractive!

However, this way, the description would take too long. My spirituality wouldn't be able to endure if everyone were to watch such a movie. Also, the longer one stays above the gray fog, the more likely it is that something bad will happen in the outside world… Klein suddenly felt lucky.

Alger finished watching in silence as he thought over it. He got The Sun to pick a few important points he had chosen to present them above the long bronze table. Among them included the mural of the Fallen Creator resisting the six "evil gods."

"Which evil gods are these?" Alger looked at the octopus with lightning wrapped around its body, black waves at its feet, an avian-feathered cloak on its back, and a three-pronged trident in its hand as he began to make connections.

Derrick shook his head honestly.

"I don't know. I thought you would know them."

Audrey and Fors cast their gazes over at the same time, carefully observing them several times, but they still failed to come up with any guesses.

They had originally thought that these were six of the eight ancient gods from the legends of the City of Silver, but they couldn't find a suitable match. After all, there was a dragon, an elf, a giant, a phoenix, and an Annihilation Demonic Wolf, while there was only one giant in the mural.

This… The Fool took a serious look and his pupils nearly contracted.

In consideration of his standing, he had only taken a cursory look at the mural in the beginning, but now, he finally realized that something was wrong.

This is very similar to the statues of the six gods which I saw in the Tudor family's underground ruin, except that one is a normal version and the other is a corrupted version… It really is a bit hard for people to look at it directly, especially Earth Mother, Lord of Storms, and Eternal Blazing Sun. Not only have they been sullied as evil gods, but they're even akin to ugly monsters… Klein didn't feel a sense of sudden enlightenment from having realized the truth. He had expected the True Creator to disparage the six gods and distort their images.

However, I can't completely ignore the possibility of this mural appearing. Just like how I had always thought that the orthodox gods didn't have a human form, with only symbols left. As a result, the statues in the ruins of the Tudor family have made me less certain… It seems like the establishment of the images of the gods have undergone a long evolution, and many secrets are hidden within… Klein was relieved when he saw that Miss Justice was focusing on examining the mural and didn't pay attention to Mr. Fool's attitude.

Because it involved whether or not Little Sun could get out of the strange predicament of repeating that short period of life, he decided to tell them what he knew.

Of course, the long introduction and display of the images of the six gods inside the underground ruin didn't fit the identity of The Fool. He intended to control The World to complete this task.

And this was in line with his goal of making The World and Sherlock Moriarty equivalent.

The Fool should enigmatically say, "Evernight, Sun, Storm, Wisdom, Earth, Giant," and then give no explanation, with superfluous descriptions… Klein thought for two seconds and let The World say in a hoarse voice, "I've seen similar statues."

After attracting everyone's gaze, he paused and added, "In an adventure to a Fourth Epoch ruin."

Audrey was very interested, but she maintained her basic level of restraint.

"Mr. World, what kind of statues were there? Can you show it to us? Of course, if you aren't willing to, or if you require compensation, it's negotiable."

"There's no need, as this might also solve some of my doubts." The World smiled darkly.

He acted by making a request to Mr. Fool, and when he got permission, he conjured the statues of the six gods and their corresponding Sacred Emblems.

With her head against the full moon, the lady, who wore layers upon layers of hazy dresses that didn't repeat, gave off an exceptionally beautiful feeling. On her long black skirt, there were also specks of starlight, as if it were a night sky, and on top of that, that iconic Evernight Sacred Emblem. Audrey immediately recognized her to be the Evernight Goddess she worshiped.

This statue was most similar to the evil god in the upper left corner of the mural, but its face was more human, and there were no strange eyes hidden around it!

What sacrilege! This is sacrilegious to the Goddess! Audrey was a little angry, but she quickly calmed down.

As the most infamous evil god, it's expected that the True Creator would let his followers disfigure the Goddess… But, why would there be a humanoid sculpture of the goddess in the underground ruins… Isn't it said that the orthodox gods only have symbols? Audrey frowned slightly, lost in thought.

Alger felt somewhat enlightened as he said with a sigh, "So the murals depict the distorted images of the six gods.

"'They' really had humanoid images in the past…"

Perhaps this is the reason why the Churches have always been trying to find the Forsaken Land of the Gods… As for the Forsaken Land of the Gods, it's most likely hidden in the depths of the Sonia Sea. Yes, it definitely doesn't exist in a normal state; otherwise, it would be impossible for the deities to not notice it… Alger added silently inwardly.

The Sun was first taken aback before he came to a realization.

"Mr. Hanged Man, are these the deities that all of you mentioned before—the Evernight Goddess, the Lord of Storms…?"

"Yes," The Hanged Man gave an affirmative answer.

"What do 'They' have to do with the apocalypse? What does it have to do with our land being forsaken by the Lord?" Derrick subconsciously pressed.

Unfortunately, no one could answer him.

Fors raised her hand in confusion.

"Why is there no God of Steam and Machinery?"

This was the god she believed in.

In the Northern and Southern Continents, the seven gods had always been equal!

"Rumor has it that the God of Steam and Machinery, also known as the God of Craftsmanship, wasn't born until the Fourth Epoch. From the looks of it, it's true, and the time node at which 'He' was born seems to be in the late Fourth Epoch, not in the early or mid-Fourth Epoch…" The Hanged Man said, a mixture of explanations and guesses.

He had an unconcealable enthusiasm for such topics.

So that's the case… Fors felt a little guilty as she had never read the Steam and Machinery Bible seriously, and her faith appeared as just a way of life.

Derrick didn't harp on the previous matter and instead asked, "Is this mural the key point?"

"Perhaps, you can try to break it, but don't, heh, don't let the chief suspect you." The Hanged Man was about to say that he shouldn't attempt to pronounce the honorific names of one of the six gods, or else 'He' or 'They' might directly descend into the Forsaken Land of the Gods, but after careful consideration, he realized that the Little Sun didn't know the corresponding honorific names at all.

"Alright. Thank you, Mr. Hanged Man. You're always so kind and enthusiastic. Also, Miss Justice, Miss Magician, and Mr. World, you are similarly as kindhearted," Derrick thanked them sincerely.

Kind? Enthusiastic? The Hanged Man was momentarily unsure of how to react.

This was the first time that someone had used such words to describe him.

After the discussion was over, Klein suddenly remembered something. In the previous exploration of the abandoned temple of the True Creator, the

City of Silver found the name "Rose Redemption." However, it didn't seem to pay attention to this.

It can't be ignored… According to the evil spirit in the underground ruin, this extremely secretive organization is an organization led by fallen angels, and it is in no way inferior to the Twilight Hermit Order. Perhaps the "cyclic time" was set up by them… Thinking of this, The Fool, who was sitting upright in a high back chair, leisurely adjusted his posture and used his fingers to lightly tap the edge of the long, mottled table.

Audrey immediately turned her head and looked at Mr. Fool in excitement, waiting for 'Him' to give a hint.

The Hanged Man, The Sun, The Magician, and The World also looked expectantly at Mr. Fool.

Amid the fog, Klein chuckled and said, "Rose Redemption."

Rose Redemption? What is that… The key point to getting out of this predicament? That's right, there's such a name in the corner of a mural near the top of the temple! Derrick seemed to understand something.

Alger, Audrey, and Fors also recalled and gave the name "Rose Redemption" high importance, but they didn't fully understand the true meaning that Mr. Fool was trying to convey.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, what does Rose Redemption represent?" Audrey raised her hand and took the initiative to ask.

This time, Klein didn't respond other than giving a short laugh.

His idea was very simple. The organization, the Rose Redemption, was intricately tied to the True Creator. No matter what happened in the temple, it would always point to them in some way.

As for whether this name was a so-called key point, Klein wasn't sure or worried. After all, he held the right to interpretation.

If The Sun and the others misunderstood the real meaning, how could it be Mr. Fool's fault?

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CHAPTER 462
WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Seeing The Fool chuckling silently, Audrey and the others had no choice but to withdraw their gaze and stop asking questions.

In a situation like this where they were only given hints and not explanations, they didn't find it problematic. Existences at the level of deities typically had similar habits, and sometimes, what they gave weren't even hints, but revelations.

In the eyes of a powerful figure like Mr. Fool, just providing a single name is enough. Our failure to comprehend things is because we are lacking. We need to work harder at figuring out and attempting things… Audrey was increasingly looking forward to her future as a Psychiatrist.

“…I remember that there was something related to Rose Redemption in that semi-abandoned temple?" Alger tilted his head and looked at The Sun.

Without any hesitation, Derrick nodded and said, "Yes. It was text derived from Jotun in a corner of the murals. We used quite some time to decipher those words."

Text derived from Jotun… Alger hadn't paid much attention to this detail before, but he couldn't help but make connections at that moment in time.

*That little boy, Jack, seems to have gone there from the Sonia Sea… Text derived from Jotun… *Alger deliberated before making a request to conjure a line of text.

Those words were in ancient Feysac, the origins of the Northern Continent's language, and they meant: "Rose Redemption."

Derrick took a closer look and was stunned.

"It's very close, but the way that the words end is handled differently.

"Mr. Hanged Man, is this a language from where you come from?"

As he spoke, Derrick conjured the text on the mural again.

"Yes." Alger gave an affirmative answer. "This language itself has evolved. The one you found should be of an earlier type."

In the world of linguistics, this type of language which is similar to ancient Feysac is widely regarded as a characteristic of the Solomon Empire… Historian Klein gave the most accurate answer in his mind.

Alger paused.

"What about the content of the corresponding mural?"

"I wasn't in charge of that area, and I didn't take a careful look before departing…" Derrick instantly felt ashamed.

Alger nodded without a change in expression.

"Find a chance to clarify this. There might be a crucial point hidden within."

"Alright!" Derrick was increasingly convinced that things weren't so bad after all.

Seeing that he had relaxed quite a bit, Audrey was a little curious and a little puzzled as she asked, "Mr. Hanged Man, if that young boy named Jack is

the child of the Listener you described, why would he be able to communicate with The Sun and the others?"

After discussing the corresponding terms for "Rose Redemption," she was completely certain that the City of Silver used a different language compared to the other countries in the Northern and Southern Continent like Loen.

And above the gray fog, everyone is able to communicate fluently, without any gaps in communication. It's all thanks to Mr. Fool's powers… Audrey praised in her heart.

Alger scoffed as he looked at her.

"Miss Justice, you haven't experienced any Beyonder events, have you?

"Jack has already become such a terrifying monster, so what else can't he change? Trust me, there are times when language knowledge is very easy to obtain, with it taking just a second or two."

"…”

Audrey blinked, feeling that she had once again exposed that she didn't have much experience or knowledge in mysticism.

After this matter came to a close, the Tarot Gathering resumed as per the usual schedule. Audrey looked towards the end of the long bronze table and said, "Mr. Fool, this time there are three more Roselle diary pages. I still owe you seven."

Upon hearing that, Fors hurriedly added, "Mr. Fool, I also received some responses. There will be new Roselle diary pages the next time."

"Very well." Klein chuckled in response.

By the side, Derrick suddenly felt ashamed again, because he hadn't had time to visit the library last week to look through any material and memorize historical details due to his participation in the exploratory team.

After a simple process, Klein picked up the three diary pages which were conjured, and he began to read with great anticipation.

"8th August. For the first time, I was invited to the White Maple Palace to attend a ball held by His Majesty.

"These aristocrats are really f*cking extravagant, with the food they eat completely being in pursuit of novelty. Things like grilled swans, sheep's testicles…

"I have to say, I was very surprised at the beginning. The aristocrats of this world, yes—this is limited only to aristocrats, really love cleanliness; it's common for them to take baths, and toilet paper has already taken a nascent form. They totally aren't like the aristocrats of Earth's middle ages.

"I originally thought that this was an effect of the existence of true gods, but I was later informed that this was an improvement that had to be made because of some kind of threat. Beyonders of a particular Sequence are able to spread the plague through dirty habits. I wonder which pathway and Sequence that is.

"At that time, my first thought was that there's something wrong with these aristocrats' brains, right? Since they're afraid of the plague, why don't they clean up the streets? Why didn't they build a complete sewage system? Why don't they uplift the slums?

"They're all in the same city. Does this mean that this place will be fine when there's a plague over there?

"Well, with water sources, food, and people isolated and them moving only in one direction, perhaps it really will be alright…

"But there are plagues that can be transmitted through the air! When I hold a high position, I must push for urban planning and clean up the environment. Even without the plague, just living in such a stinking city is still very annoying!

"Oh right, I've been summoned tonight by His Majesty.

"I thought that since I was born on Earth, I, who received an education of all men being equal, would be neither humble nor arrogant and appear rather calm. But in fact, I remained very nervous and excited, unconsciously bending my waist and bowing my head. Of course, I know that in terms of dignity, I'm equal to the King…

"This is the charm of power!"

Even though this entire page is filled with daily activities, the Emperor has still managed to make me laugh… He was also someone with a goal… Indeed, even for someone born in the modern world, they will still become apprehensive and sycophantic when faced with someone of high status, a person who can influence their fates… Klein smiled, his mood much more relaxed.

He turned to the second page and continued reading.

"11th November. About to advance to Sequence 4 to become a demigod.

"After this, as long as I don't lose control, then my life's natural order will experience a qualitative change. I would no longer be a short-lived creature. Of course, different Sequences of different pathways will be in different states.

"I faced two choices. One is Alchemist of the Savant pathway, and the other is Mysticologist of the Mystery Pryer pathway. Eventually, I chose not to change pathways since the Hidden Sage is a very dangerous existence. However, I ultimately suspect that 'He' isn't a real deity. Perhaps, 'He' is of a slightly lower level.

"After becoming an Alchemist, I will be able to inject 'soul' into the items I create and give them life. This is the feeling of being a Creator. It will definitely be excellent. It's also the reason why I continued choosing this Beyonder pathway.

"After obtaining this Sequence's Beyonder characteristic, I should be able to complete more of my concepts. There will come a day when the saying, 'it's not that we aren't working hard, it's just that the cheat has a Gundam.' It will be a Gundam in the truest meaning of the word!

"The only problem is that the corresponding ritual of Alchemist needs to extract all the life force of a particular region, desertification of the land and the drying of lakes… Why is this not much different from a cult's sacrificial ritual…

"I've always felt that the potion Sequence system has too many dark and crazy parts to it. Occasionally, it would be so evil that it can make one despair."

The Emperor also feels the same way… Seeing this, Klein couldn't help but sigh.

Sometimes, he also felt that the background color of this world was grayish-black and crazy.

Things like the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation and Indestructibility, the laws of pathway convergence, and interchangeability of close Sequences all bring about change that leads to tragedy.

Alchemist is a very interesting Sequence. Alchemical Life sounds forbidden and is a domain very close to that of deities… I wonder if the Emperor made any Gundams before he was assassinated… Probably not… Klein's thoughts drifted away for a moment.

He was rather curious about the ritual of becoming a demigod-like High-Sequence Beyonder. Unfortunately, Roselle didn't record much of it. After

all, it was a diary, not a notebook.

Sequence 4 Mysticologist of the Mystery Pryer pathway sounds good too… Klein turned over the second diary page and displayed the third page in front of him.

"23rd April. This bunch of aristocrats really are a mess! I even thought that Ma'am Karen had seduced me for sex because she had taken a fancy for my inner self. But who knew that her husband, the Earl of Champagne, was peeping in the opposite room. He was even thrilled and even f**king wanted to f**k me!

"I'm sorry, but I just can't accept it, so I had to kick him out of the room.

"Compared to their family, I'm just a pure child!"

"…”

Klein was momentarily speechless. He felt that the private life of Emperor Roselle was really filled with excitement and that many of the Intis aristocracy were also sufficiently eccentric.

If some aristocrat tries to seek novelty and finds a curly-haired baboon, some kind of disease might even be born… Klein sighed and looked down.

"25th April. To cultivate my character and hone my mind, I went fishing at Swan Lake. I hope that one day I can go fishing at sea for a mermaid.

"Sigh, I've been quite depraved recently. I have to invigorate my spirit and invent more things. I can't leave any gaps! Since I transmigrated to this world, I will brand this era with my name!"

…Emperor, it's better if you had fallen into depravity… Klein's mouth twitched without any intention of making comment.

Then, he calmly looked at the last diary entry on the last page.

"26th April. Zaratul came visiting. I deliberately asked him what a miracle was.

"He asked me in return about what I thought it was.

"What I think it is? There is only one miracle in my heart, and that is the wonders of civilization! For example, the Great Twilight Hall of the Feysac Empire, the former residence of the Giant King, Aurmir.

"Zaratul finally gave a direct answer.

"He said, 'What is a miracle? A miracle is to be resurrected from the dead!'"

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CHAPTER 463
ANSWERING HIS OWN QUESTIONS

A miracle is to be resurrected from the dead?

Klein suddenly remembered what had happened to him!

The head injury of a man who shot himself in the head miraculously healing; a Beyonder who, having died from having his heart crushed, crawled out of his grave in the middle of the night—are these considered "miracles" of being resurrected from the dead? Is this the "miracle" the leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul, spoke of? And Sequence 2 of the Seer pathway is called a Miracle Invoker! At this moment, Klein felt like he had grasped something important, but he was unable to piece together all the clues to form the truth he wanted.

As I had guessed before, there are other factors at work for my choice of having Seer as my beginning Sequence… My greatest support is the mysterious space above the gray fog which happens to eliminate all interference and provide Seers the most coveted environment… My characteristic of "resurrection" also seems to have come from the gray fog as well…

When I came to Backlund, the events in which Nimblewright Master Rosago was involved in were naturally drawn to me, which is consistent with the convergence of Beyonder characteristics of the same pathway. The higher "quality" it is, the stronger the attraction as the effects appear intermittently… The sudden change in the Antigonus family notebook's style of passing key information to me, related to the main peak of the Hornacis

mountain range via the Misfortune Cloth Puppet, might also be a result of such elements…

Combined with the other miscellaneous phenomena, does it mean that this mysterious space has a very close relationship with the Seer Beyonder pathway? That this is a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact of the corresponding Sequence? Or perhaps it's a divine kingdom left behind by a Sequence 0 of the same pathway?

There's also the possibility of it being the so-called "Uniqueness" of the Seer pathway…

Klein moved his gaze away from Roselle's diary, his anticipation for advancing to a High-Sequence Beyonder increasing. He wondered what he would discover in the hidden area after he completed the staircase of light.

Perhaps the reason for my transmigration and the way home will be found there… He suppressed his excitement and allowed Roselle's diary pages to disappear from his hands.

At the same time, he became increasingly wary of the leader of the Secret Order, Zaratul.

He was a powerful existence that had long since become a Miracle Invoker from the Seer pathway many years ago!

There might be times and matters that have his fingerprints hidden all over them!

Although all of these thoughts were churning in his mind, Klein acted as though nothing had happened as he calmly said, "You can begin your transactions."

Fors immediately turned to look at Miss Justice who sat on the same side of the table, and she said with expectation, "I have received a reply. My teacher has a pair of Mirror Dragon eyes. The price is 1,000 pounds."

Upon saying that, Fors felt a little uneasy. This was because Dorian Gray Abraham's reserve price was 800 pounds, which was already at a premium above the usual 500–600 pounds. And on that foundation, she had added another 200 pounds.

After attending so many Tarot Gatherings and all kinds of Beyonder circles, I finally understand one thing. Just like Emperor Roselle said, money isn't omnipotent, but nothing can be done without money…

Although I've already received the fixed payment for my new book and have savings reaching 350 pounds, there's still the Spirit Eater stomach pouch awaiting me. There's also all kinds of expenses needed for Sequence 7, 6, 5, and even 4… The meaning before Mr. Fool's secret hint is that I should be able to be freed from the curse of the full moon once I become a High-Sequence Beyonder… Even if I can find some of them through Teacher, I can't fully rely on him and the Abraham family…

In this regard, saving up money on my own isn't enough, and efforts must be made to make money…

The price of 1,000 pounds is really expensive. If Miss Justice wishes to bargain, I'll later tell her that Teacher agreed to lower the price by 100 pounds after repeated negotiations… As Fors waited for the reply, she consoled herself.

"1,000 pounds?" Audrey never expected to receive news for the Psychiatrist potion ingredients so quickly, so she subconsciously asked in a confirming tone.

Without waiting for a reply from Fors, she happily added, "Okay, deal!"

Although she still owed Viscount Glaint a final installment and still owed The Fool's adorer 2,000 pounds, she would officially be declared an adult at the New Year's Ball. Not only would her control over her wealth be greater than ever before, but she would also receive many valuable gifts, such as the one promised by her father, Earl Hall, a few days earlier. He had

promised to give his dear daughter a further 50,000 pounds in Backlund Bank shares and more than 2,000 pounds in cash. Hence, 1,000 pounds wasn't a number that she was bothered with.

Audrey had originally asked Mr. Fool to extend the payment period of the 2,000 pounds to February or March in order, on the one hand, to pay off her debt to Viscount Glaint, and to save up money as discreetly as possible without arousing suspicion. On the other hand, she had to set aside an additional budget for the ingredients of the Psychiatrist potion.

Now was the time to use the budget!

*At most, I'll have to tighten my belt like how I did for the past few months. After March, there wouldn't be any problems! *Audrey thought, not troubled at all.

She agreed? She agreed… Fors was both happy and confused.

Fors asked Mr. Fool to bear witness to the transaction and arranged for Miss Justice to make the payment first before she delivered the Beyonder ingredient on Wednesday. As Fors decided to head for Pritz Harbor immediately upon receiving the cash, without wasting any time in the middle, she looked at the three gentlemen—The Sun, The Hanged Man, and The World.

"Does anyone have any information on the Spirit Eater stomach pouch?"

After calming down, she discovered that with her experience in the acting method, she could digest the excess Beyonder characteristic much faster than she had expected. One week was almost equivalent to two weeks of the past.

In about ten days, she would be able to completely digest and resolve the problem.

When she gathers the ingredients and advances to Trickmaster, she felt that she would be able to perfectly pass the first test given by her teacher, Dorian. She would gain more attention and would no longer be a mere student who was taken in out of gratitude.

Derrick nodded and said, "I was just about to tell you that during this exploration, we obtained some Spirit Eater stomach pouches. I can exchange it at low prices after I return to the City of Silver. Uh, that's under the premise that I'm no longer under surveillance."

"Okay, but it seems that you have no use for gold pounds?" Fors asked directly.

After the operation to save Little Sun, she had a preliminary understanding of the City of Silver.

Without waiting for The Sun to say a word, Alger interjected, "You can hand me the corresponding cash or gold coins to me. 300 pounds is a very reasonable price. I will provide the Solar High Priest potion formula to The Sun."

"Mr. Hanged Man, you have the formula to Solar High Priest?" Derrick asked in pleasant surprise.

During his previous patrols and his recent explorations, he had increasingly felt that the powers of the Sun pathway were perfect for dealing with the dark.

Although the Giant pathway's Sequence 6 Dawn Paladin could already create the light of dawn, in the realm of the Holy and Light, it's still inferior to a Light Suppliant!

The Hanged Man nodded slightly and said, "That's right!"

He had found the Solar High Priest potion formula in a treasury of the Rorsted Archipelago, but it was only recently that he had found an

opportunity to provide sufficient justification and have the sufficient conditions to have the right to read it once.

The reason that he gave was that people suspected to be priests of the Church of the Eternal Blazing Sun had appeared on the Sonia Sea, and since he was temporarily unable to return to the Intis Republic, he could only search for the potion ingredients corresponding to Solar High Priest. Moreover, the hatred for the Eternal Blazing Sun could turn mere rumors into the basis for action by the Church of the Lord of Storms.

Derrick was delighted at first, but he soon said with some awkwardness, "The value of the Sequence 7 potion formula is higher than a Spirit Eater's stomach pouch. I… I don't have the gold pounds all of you were talking about."

"You can repay it with ingredients of the same value," The Hanged Man gave a terse response. "But I don't know what I can get from you… First, you should make a list of the common monsters found around the City of Silver and their corresponding ingredients. I'll then choose from that list."

"No problem. After this exploration is over, I will do it as quickly as possible." Derrick was visibly relieved.

By the side, Klein wanted to facepalm, but in the end, he didn't manipulate The World to break the deal. It was because he also wanted to know what kind of monsters and ingredients were common around the City of Silver.

As Audrey secretly sighed, The Hanged Man looked around and raised his request.

"I need a pair of Dragon-Eyed Sea Condor eyes. I'll pay the necessary compensation."

He only mentioned the Dragon-Eyed Sea Condor eyes… In other words, Mr. Hanged Man has clues regarding the Blue Shadow Falcon's crystalline feathers… He really does have many channels and resources… Audrey,

who had seen the potion formula for Wind-blessed, thought with some enlightenment.

After the transactions came to an end, they began to freely exchange information about their areas, and the end of the Tarot Gathering quickly approached.

During the process, The World inquired for clues about mermaids and obtained an answer similar to the one he had received from Sharron.

When everything was over, Klein, who had been watching quietly, thought it necessary to warn Miss Justice and Miss Magician.

*A terrifying object that is suspected to be a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact has appeared around Prince Edessak. It might even involve 0-08, which would definitely not be a simple matter. Furthermore, the last time a similar situation occurred, Tingen City had faced the threat of an evil god's spawn, and it had almost disappeared from the map! Hence, now there's also a hidden danger in Backlund! *Klein thought for a few seconds, making The World say in a hoarse voice, "Ladies and gentlemen, I have recently received some information that a major event is brewing in Backlund. This will bring about a great deal of unrest and may lead to a tragedy."

"What's the major event?" Audrey asked with concern.

Unknowingly, her brow had begun to slightly furrow.

"I don't know." The World shook his head calmly.

"Where would the element of unrest and the possible tragedy come from?" Fors asked nervously.

From the previous gatherings, she had confirmed that Mr. World's sources were trustworthy.

The World acted stumped as he shook his head and said, "There's contradictory information, making it impossible for me to give a definite answer."

Upon saying this, he looked up and earnestly cast his gaze towards the figure within the gray fog at the end of the mottled table.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, your adorer in Backlund must've detected something, right?"

Everyone's eyes immediately focused towards the end of the long bronze table, with everyone feeling different feelings—curiosity, worry, anticipation, and tenseness.

With the attention on him, Klein leaned back and said in a casual tone, "Edessak Augustus."

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CHAPTER 464
CONSULTATION

Prince Edessak Augustus? What connection does he have with the danger that might lead to tragedy? Moreover, this matter seems to have received the attention of Mr. Fool! Audrey instantly matched the name with a face, giving rise to great worry and doubt in her.

In her opinion, things that caught the attention of Mr. Fool were either very dangerous, extremely secretive, or had far-reaching importance, and were by no means simple. For example, the True Creator had attempted to descend upon Backlund with the help of Lanevus and the harsh conditions of East Borough's factory district, Emperor Roselle's Dark Emperor card, or the death of the Duke Negan, and the Twilight Hermit Order.

Taking these examples into account, Audrey had good reason to believe that, if not handled well, or given too little attention, the major event involving Prince Edessak would inevitably lead to a very, very terrible storm!

Yes… Prince Edessak hasn't bothered me for quite some time, and I was only relieved by that and didn't think too much about it. Now, it does seem a little problematic… At the previous ball, he still warmly kept me back to discuss some boring topics, trying his hand at pompous bad humor. But just two or three days after that, he turned rather cold and had even deliberately avoided me… I have to find a chance to ask Father about him, but I can't show too much curiosity, or else it might be very possible that he would agree to the royal family's marriage request… Audrey recalled some details, and she suddenly felt her shoulders sink from the weight.

She had never liked Prince Edessak, including his two elder brothers, and she had no intention of becoming a princess consort. As for the reason, it was very simple. The followers of the Evernight Goddess couldn't accept that the Augustus family had believed in the Lord of Storms for generations, which meant their arrogance, pomposity, contempt, and eccentricity against women had penetrated deep into their bones. It was hard to change them which was the one thing Audrey couldn't tolerate the most.

When she thought of the strict, ancient, and extremely conservative environment she would find herself in after becoming a princess consort, Audrey felt that she would surely go crazy and flee, disregarding everything else. So, she wasn't moved at all by the rather solicitous flattery of the princes; she was even very repulsed.

Edessak Augustus… The last name implies that he's a member of the royal family. I vaguely remember that he's a prince? What dangerous matter is he going to do? I have no way of coming into contact with him… Right, I can ask Miss Audrey and Viscount Glaint for help, but I have to think of a reason ahead of time to prevent any suspicion from them… Fors frowned slightly as she interpreted Mr. Fool's words.

Alger was very interested in the matter, but he didn't dare to ask Mr. Fool, who was obviously just providing a hint. He could only ponder to himself for two seconds before saying to Justice, The Magician, and The World, "The atmosphere over the sea isn't calm either. It might have a connection with Backlund, just like those machines."

His words were completely baseless. He simply wanted to exaggerate the degree of the danger and let the three Tarot Club members in Backlund investigate it diligently.

…I have to say that Mr. Hanged Man has acted in concert so well… Klein, who was watching from the sidelines, gave up on the idea of having The World say something similar.

He only mentioned Prince Edessak, but not the lady with the sapphire ring who was suspected of having a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact. He didn't even mention the possibility that the matter Prince Edessak might be involved in had to do with 0-08 and Ince Zangwill because he didn't know the circumstances of the top Sealed Artifact that could even destroy a country. All he could rely on were minute clues to make guesses that he wasn't completely sure of. He was afraid that if he directly told the key points to Justice and Miss Magician, their investigations would be detected by the target the moment they honed in on the target.

This was also why Klein didn't try to find an opportunity to inform the Machinery Hivemind. Based on his guesses about Sealed Artifact 0-08, he suspected that if he left Minsk Street and rode a horse carriage to the Lever Cathedral or the Steam Cathedral, he would encounter an unexpected and absolutely unstoppable attack, such as the eruption of a Sealed Artifact hidden underground or a fatal strike of a High-Sequence Beyonder.

Only the screening of the gray fog allowed Klein to not worry about such problems. To a certain extent, he could inform Justice and The Magician about this through a more gentle, more roundabout, and more veiled manner.

In addition, Klein had other plans. It was to "leave" Backlund by bowing out the stage as a side character among side characters and changing his appearance without anyone noticing. He would then secretly return and contact the Machinery Hivemind in a manner beyond the Grade 0 Sealed Artifact's senses!

Let's hope this will succeed. I hope there's a chance of finding Ince Zangwill! Yes, the premise is that he is indeed involved in this matter… Wait a minute, while Mr. Azik was after Ince Zangwill, he had a conflict with MI9. He became secretly wanted, and MI9 has always been considered to be a pro-royal faction in the military… A series of coincidences revolving Prince Edessak is rather similar to the features displayed by Sealed Artifact 0-08 in the past… This seems to indirectly confirm Ince Zangwill's existence…

Klein closed his eyes, and the bright boots and pale hand flashed back to him.

He leaned back in his chair, his lips curving upward.

"Ladies and gentlemen, we shall meet next week."

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Earl Hall.

Audrey stood in front of the full-length mirror, staring blankly at her reflection.

There were good news and bad news for her at this Tarot Gathering.

The good news was that she was about to receive one of the Psychiatrist potion's main ingredients.

Although she was no longer the ignorant girl who had bought some basic general knowledge from The Hanged Man for a thousand pounds and knew the approximate price of a lot of Beyonder ingredients, she didn't mind paying a premium for the eyes of a Mirror Dragon.

After Duke Negan's assassination, she gained the desire and motivation to raise her Sequence to receive the corresponding combat strength. For this, she didn't want to wait any longer and was willing to pay a price—as long as the ingredients appeared, she would immediately accept the offer as long as the price wasn't too outrageous, in case something unexpected happened.

It's like a precious piece of jewelry that many noble ladies have set their eyes on. It's also like the purebred houses with unique bloodlines that men like. The corresponding premium is inevitable and unavoidable. At times, it's not impossible to have the price double or triple… Besides, with Fors busying herself in the process of contacting her teacher, she definitely

shouldn't be left wasting her time while taking on risks. Yes… She also doesn't know that I'm Justice… Audrey thought indifferently.

As for the bad news, it was no doubt related to the matter of Prince Edessak. It left her concerned and worried.

Fortunately, Mr. World received the news, and Mr. Fool had provided a warning. Otherwise, who knows how things would've turned out… Audrey, with such excellent conditions, you could certainly solve this problem! Come on! The girl drew the sign of the crimson moon against the reflection in the mirror and tried hard to be optimistic.

Then, she restrained her emotions and headed out to the piano room, preparing to participate in her scheduled piano lesson as if nothing had happened.

This was because Earl Hall and his wife, as well as Hibbert Hall wouldn't be home until dinner, and she had no one to ask for information now. She could only tell herself to be calm, to be composed, and to be patient.

Before the tutor arrived, Audrey casually played the piano, using the beautiful melody to cleanse her mind and soul.

When she finished playing, she noticed that Susie had opened the door at some point and was sitting beside her. She still had a pair of gold-rimmed glasses hanging around her neck.

"Audrey, what problems did you encounter? The sound of your piano tells me that you're frustrated over something," Susie said suddenly.

Uh… Audrey froze, not knowing how to reply.

She suddenly felt that having a "mind-reading dog" at home wasn't necessarily a good thing…

…

Within the campsite that had a lit bonfire.

With his eyes closed, Derrick Berg thought back quietly to what had happened at the Tarot Gathering and made sure that he hadn't forgotten the memories of his repeated experiences.

After an unknown period of time, he opened his eyes, which were brimming with anticipation, and looked around. However, what entered into his eyes were flames and his teammates, who were exactly the same as in his memories.

At that moment, the cross-legged Demon Hunter Colin, who was leaning against a stone pillar, said, "We will set off after 50 rounds of lightning."

At this moment, Derrick was sure that everything that had happened before wasn't a dream or a hallucination.

…

Cherwood Borough. 15 Minsk Street.

Klein went down to the first floor and sat in the activity room, feeling the warmth of the fireplace.

He quietly rocked in the reclining chair without reading the newspapers, magazines, or even books.

It was all so peaceful and silent until he heard the ringing of his doorbell.

Klein, who was wearing a house shirt and cashmere vest, got up and walked towards the door. The visitor took him by surprise.

He opened the door and chuckled.

"Good afternoon, Emlyn. Aren't you supposed to be helping at the Harvest Church at this hour?"

It was the handsome, somewhat effeminate, Vampire Emlyn White, whose hair was combed back at an angle.

The arrogant man's expression froze when he heard Klein's greeting. It took him a bit of effort to recover his composure.

"I have something to consult with you, Detective. Sherlock. Moriarty!" Emlyn enunciated one word at a time.

After inviting him into the activity room, Klein returned to his reclining chair and asked with a smile, "What is it? The fee for a consultation is one pound, but the consultation cannot exceed an hour."

Emlyn White didn't pay attention to his words, and he said while deep in thought, "A big shot wants me to do something… Although that matter can help me solve my problem indirectly, it also contains a great amount of risk.

"I don't have any friends, and I'm afraid my parents will be worried, and you're a very knowledgeable Beyonder detective… What do you suggest? Reject or accept?"

Solve your problem? Clearing the psychological cue? Klein said thoughtfully, "I can't give you any advice with just the word 'something.'"

Emlyn White fell silent for a few seconds before he clenched his teeth and said in a low voice, "It has something to do with that Fool…"

"Huh?" Klein almost lifted his hand to his ear.

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CHAPTER 465
EMLYN'S DETERMINATION

After a second of confirmation, Klein clasped his hands together and leaned forward.

"What exactly is this something?"

"No, I can't say any further." Emlyn White shook his head firmly.

Afraid of being probed, Klein didn't pursue the matter. He simply analyzed the situation based on the information that the vampire had just revealed.

Something to do with The Fool… It can help Emlyn White resolve his problem… Contains a high risk… Combined with his previous ideas, this seems to indicate that he intended to hold an appropriate ritual to pray to The Fool, which is also me, so as to eliminate the psychological cue and gain his long-awaited freedom… However, this is no longer a ritual that Emlyn will be holding himself. It's a result of a particular big shot's instructions, and with this vampire's pride, for him to address the person that way, it most likely means that the person is a powerhouse among the Sanguine… Why would a Sanguine big shot send a descendant to pray to The Fool? Have they started working with the Aurora Order?

Confused, Klein looked up at the expectant Emlyn and scoffed to himself.

Try guessing if I'll respond to your prayers.

He hesitated for two seconds and didn't make a suggestion. Instead, he said, "Statistically speaking, when praying to a hidden existence without understanding the situation, 30 out of 100 cases would not receive any

response. 68 cases will end up encountering all sorts of terrible things and cause them to lose their lives, or live a life worse than death. Only two cases have the possibility of success, allowing them to get what they want, but the price they pay might not be what they want."

As a former keyboard warrior, Klein had always believed that when it came to proving something or reinforcing a point of view, anyone who just gave an example, an exception, without mentioning the entire sample and overall statistics was being an asshole. It was merely a trick of concept, and in these cases, there were usually similar companion words, such as "I have a friend," "a girl I know," or "someone around me."

Therefore, to convince Emlyn White, he deliberately fabricated some data.

Of course, this wasn't entirely baseless. At least, many of the files which Klein had read while he was a member of a Nighthawks team had described similar situations.

"Only two cases of success? Problems happen to 68 cases?" Startled, Emlyn couldn't help but lift his hand to smooth his hair.

"Basically, that is the level of danger over the matter you're going to do. If you have malicious intentions, the risk is even higher than this," Klein replied sincerely.

Emlyn shook his head subconsciously.

"No, there's no malice. B-besides, the big shot will protect me in the process."

No malice? Uh, even if you have malice, you might not know since you're just cannon fodder who has been pushed to the front lines… Klein raised his right palm and strengthened his tone with a gesture.

"This will reduce the risk by a lot, but it definitely won't reduce it to zero. Does that big shot really have the means to resist a hidden existence?"

“…Probably, not," Emlyn answered haltingly.

"So." Klein spread his hands.

He suddenly revealed a smile and said, "Emlyn, there is no need for you to take this risk. Even if you completely believe in Earth Mother, it will not affect your life in any way. Look at the citizens of Feynapotter; don't they eat, dress, and do whatever they want? When the time comes, there's a high chance that Father Utravsky will no longer force you to do volunteer work at the Harvest Church. You will regain your original freedom.

"Furthermore, I believe that you have adapted well to the teachings of Earth Mother without any contradictions."

Emlyn White remained silent for a while and said, "Being a believer because I like 'Her' beliefs is completely different from being forcefully turned into a believer through a psychological cue. Even if I do abandon the moon one day and believe in Earth Mother, I also hope that it is a choice that I freely made. It has nothing to do with others; this is the last pride of a Sanguine."

Klein looked at Emlyn with some surprise. He hadn't expected him to be so insistent.

He considered for two seconds and didn't try to persuade him again by giving a terse acknowledgment.

"The problem is actually very simple, that is, do you have the courage to face a certain degree of danger because of the orders of the big shot and the temptation to get rid of the cue. If you're willing to sacrifice your life for this, then the answer is extremely simple.

"In short, this matter will ultimately be left to you to decide."

Emlyn listened with a heavy expression, and he instinctively retorted, "If I really choose to make the attempt, it's definitely not for myself, but for all

Sanguine! Resolving this problem is just an additional perk!"

For all Sanguine? What matter of mine involves all Sanguine? That big shot was lying to you, right? Klein sneered.

"Do you believe that a weak vampire has the chance to save an entire race?"

"Sanguine, Sanguine!" Emlyn emphasized. "Moreover, my strength isn't bad either. It's equivalent to Sequence 7 of you humans. By the way, it's the kind that specializes in combat!

"As for whether you believe it or not, you wouldn't understand." He stood up and said, "Although your analysis and suggestions are meaningless, I still have to thank you. Uh, the consultation fee will be deducted from the previous suitcase and tin box."

"Huh?" Klein wasn't able to react for a moment to what he was talking about.

It was only when Emlyn had left that he suddenly realized what he meant.

Aren't the vessels in large transactions usually free?

That petty and stingy vampire!

…

In the darkness, in which the frequency of lightning had yet to resume, the exploratory team from the City of Silver "punctually" arrived at the periphery of the abandoned temple.

Derrick remembered that during their first operation, all the animal hide lanterns had been extinguished here. The entire team fell into pure darkness, and he had also heard the creepy "cry for help" coming from the depths of the temple.

*According to the conjectures from Mr. Hanged Man and Miss Justice, this might be the starting point for our repeated cycles. But why would we wake up in the campsite outside the city and not directly here? *Remembering the discussion at the Tarot meeting, Derrick raised his arm and prayed secretly, as suggested.

A pure light suddenly burst out from his body, causing Joshua and the other members of the exploratory team to quickly assume battle positions.

"What happened?" Demon Hunter Colin drew his sword and asked in a deep voice.

Derrick looked left and right in "horror" and said, "Your Excellency, I just heard a child crying 'save me… save me… '"

He wanted to test if this was a key point!

"And now?" Colin asked warily.

"I don't hear it anymore." Derrick listened carefully.

Demon Hunter Colin glanced at Joshua and the others from the corner of his eye. "Did any of you hear it?"

"No." The exploratory team members shook their heads.

After pondering for a few seconds, Colin came to a decision. He took out a dark blue metal bottle from the secret compartment in his belt and smeared the colorless, viscous liquid on his sword.

Then, he stabbed upwards with his sword.

Suddenly, the sky lit up. Streaks of silver, snake-like beams started to surge upwards, quickly spreading in all directions.

The silver-white light instantly enveloped all the members of the exploratory team, as if illuminating the darkest "corner" of every single one of them.

With a sizzling sound, the silver serpents drilled into the void, heading off into the unknown.

Everything calmed down very quickly, leaving only the dim light of the animal hide lanterns scattered in silence.

Colin narrowed his eyes, whatever he attempted had sensed something unknown. After a full five seconds, he raised his hand and pointed forward.

"From now on, we can't afford to be careless. We have to be on full alert."

Such familiar words… This isn't the key to breaking out of this predicament… Derrick calmed his heart and followed the team into the half-deserted temple without any delay.

This time, he learned his lesson and didn't look at the face of the Fallen Creator. In the process of inspecting the ground, he managed to get himself to investigate the area where the mural was by being proactive.

He held onto the animal hide lantern and the Axe of Hurricane in his hands as he and one of his teammates began to take action as a small team.

He finally reached his destination after passing through a series of mottled and crumbling walls.

As the light from the animal hide lantern grew closer, the mural on the wall gradually became clearer.

Derrick first looked towards the corner and found the strange, memorable line of words.

Rose Redemption… he silently chanted the name, raised the animal hide lantern, and carefully examined the details of the mural.

On the highest area of the mottled wall was a huge, blurry, pitch-black cross. A shadow that was difficult to discern was hanging upside down on it.

Against such a backdrop, there was a desolate plain.

In the plains, there was a long line of people. Their destination was a distant mountain—the cross on top of the mountain, and the figure hanging upside down.

Within the line, some of the people were kneeling on the ground, praying devoutly. Others had already stood up and were walking forward while facing a raging wind.

Their faces were simple sketches, as though it was trying to highlight their tattered clothing. Only the leader at the front was relatively clearer.

It was a tall and thin man with long, silver hair reaching his back.

This man had soft facial features; his head was lowered, and his eyes were tightly shut. There were layers upon layers of wings of light on his back.

Angel! A legendary angel! Derrick observed the situation around the leader with excitement.

Soon, he discovered a meandering, rippling river beneath the feet of the seemingly angelic man.

The river kept twisting and turning, and it led back into itself, becoming the source!

A cycle! This creates a cycle! Derrick felt that he had caught on to something important.

In the cycles of experiences, there was actually a circular river in the mural on the wall!

The latter was obviously hinting or revealing something!

Derrick looked up and saw the silver-haired angel with an uncountable number of wings. There was a touch of indifference in the gentleness of his face, as though he was looking down at a river, looking down at fate.

Is this the true meaning behind Mr. Fool's hint? Derrick thought for a moment and decided to give it a try—if he succeeded, he planned on blaming all his anomalies on the boy, Jack. If he failed, no one would remember what he had done!

Under the stunned gaze of his teammates, Derrick raised the Axe of Hurricane and viciously slashed at the river in the mural.

The lightning that had just flashed by was triggered, and the silver light fell onto the axe.

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CHAPTER 466
TAIL-DEVOURER

Bam!

Derrick's axe, wrapped in streaks of silver, struck the river in the mural, causing the wall to cave in and stone chips to fly everywhere.

With one strike, the river that had its source connected to its mouth completely disintegrated.

Just as he was looking forward to having the cycle broken, resulting in the members of the exploratory team escaping the temple, Demon Hunter Colin's figure phased away and appeared before him, his face grim.

"What were you doing?"

The tip of the demigod's sword was still pointed downwards, but the grip on his hilt was clearly tighter than before.

Thinking back to the collective wisdom of the Tarot Club members, Derrick said, half 'doubtfully' and half 'fearfully,' "Your Excellency, a black shadow flashed past here just now. It's true! It looked like the figure of a child!"

Without looking away, Colin Iliad asked another team member, "Haim, did you see it?"

The exploratory team member named Haim subconsciously moved closer to the Chief, firmly shook his head, and said, "No, I didn't see anything."

Colin's light blue eyes immediately glowed, revealing two complex dark green symbols.

He watched Derrick in this state for four to five seconds.

Finally, he withdrew his gaze and said in a normal tone, "This is your first exploration mission; hallucinations due to being nervous is normal.

"Subsequently, you are to stay by my side. I think you'll be calmer this way."

"Yes, Your Excellency," Derrick agreed without any hesitation.

Having just made an attempt, he confirmed that the mural wasn't critical.

The Rose Redemption that Mr. Fool suggested likely hides a deeper meaning; it's not that simple… Derrick walked silently beside Chief Colin with the Axe of Hurricane in hand.

What happened afterward wasn't much different from the explorations he remembered from his previous explorations. Everyone repeated the events in the past and arrived at the final hall with an altar for the sixth time. There, they found the yellow-haired boy, Jack, curled up in the shadows.

Upon hearing "save me… save me…” and seeing the silhouette of the child, Demon Hunter Colin nodded his head indiscernibly and retracted most of the attention he had placed on Derrick Berg.

Just as he was deliberating his words, Derrick suddenly asked, "How can we save you?"

Jack revealed an excited expression.

"Save me, save me, send me home! Send me home! "

"Where is your home?" Derrick asked, curious and frightened.

Seeing this, Colin shut his mouth and tightened his grip.

Jack raised his hand weakly and said, "My home, my home is at Enmat Harbor!"

Enmat Harbor… Although Mr. Hanged Man never mentioned it, from the word "harbor", Jack really doesn't belong to this place of ours. It's very likely that he comes from the outside world, from the Loen Kingdom where Miss Justice and the others are located! Derrick was overjoyed, unable to hide his excitement.

His reaction didn't arouse any suspicion from Demon Hunter Colin, because this powerful chief of the six-member council had also never seen the sea. He could only read from the preserved books that this body of water was many times larger than a lake, as well as the term "harbor."

The words that came out of the strange boy's mouth presented itself like a painting of a new world in front of Colin. This made him, who was desperately searching for the future of the City of Silver, forget about anything else as he blurted out, "How did you, or you and your companions, get here?"

Jack showed a reminiscing expression.

"My father and I first traveled by boat, then we met up with his companions and continued on the voyage. After a huge storm, the rest of us touched ground and followed the direction of the Lord's gaze and came all the way here."

"Followed the direction of the Lord's gaze?" Demon Hunter Colin and the others looked at the deity statue in unison, trying to determine where he was staring at.

Soon, Colin was able to determine some general information.

They had proceeded in the direction of where the statue was looking at. That is to say, as soon as we reverse the process, we can find the shore and the place where they landed… The opposite direction of his gaze is… The map around the City of Silver, which was gradually being perfected through continuous explorations, appeared in Colin's mind, allowing him to come up with a preliminary sketch of the route of the boy's "journey."

If there are no other temples in the middle and no corresponding statues, extrapolating it all the way would pass through the ruins of the Giant King's Court! Colin's pupils suddenly contracted.

That was the palace that once housed the ancient god, Giant King Aurmir. It wasn't too far away from the City of Silver!

The descendants of the Kingdom of Silver, who had been ruled by the giants for generations, knew exactly where the ruins were located, but they were still unable to complete their exploration of the area because it was extremely dangerous, even more dangerous than the pure darkness!

According to Colin's extrapolations, the unfamiliar boy and his party had passed through the ruins of the Giant King's Court before arriving here.

How did they do it? Perhaps they didn't take a completely direct path, and they circled around the Giant King's Court… Regardless, there's a path that leads to the sea behind the Giant King's Court. And on the other end of the sea might be a human kingdom… Is that the hope of the City of Silver? Colin couldn't help resisting the thought.

At this moment, Derrick acutely noticed that the clothes on the boy's chest and abdomen were dyed dark red, as though some kind of liquid was slowly seeping out.

"Are you hurt?" he cautiously asked.

Jack lowered his head and replied in an erratic tone, "Something ugly is growing there…”

As he spoke, he took off his clothes, revealing his bare chest.

It was inlaid with two eyes, a nose, and a mouth!

It wasn't painted nor was it made of gems. They were real eyes, a real nose, and a real mouth in the purest sense of the word. Furthermore, they didn't seem to belong to one particular face but that of three people.

All of a sudden, Derrick imagined a scene in which Jack had used the remnants of his companions after eating them—their eyes, nose, and mouth—to form a strange face on his chest.

The face was gentle and indifferent, giving Derrick an inexplicable feeling of familiarity.

It took only a second or two for Derrick to figure out the reason for the familiarity.

The face was very much like the angel in the mural above them—the silver-haired angel with his feet over the circular river!

Sure enough, the reason we keep repeating the exploration is because of 'Him!' A thought struck Derrick, and he blurted out a single word, as though he was going to blurt the incantation to extricate himself from the predicament.

"Rose Redemption!" he solemnly shouted.

Jack raised his head and stared at him, his mouth slowly grinning wide before reaching his ears.

"I'm so hungry…

"So hungry…”

…Derrick froze as he saw a fierce battle ensue.

When he regained consciousness, he found himself sitting by the bonfire in the campsite again.

Rose Redemption isn't the incantation.… He began to reflect deeply.

The seventh exploration soon began. Derrick, who had made an attempt, no longer behaved strangely, but he proactively sought to investigate the Rose Redemption mural.

As usual, the exploratory team entered the underground hall with the altar and the deity statue. They found the obviously strange little boy, Jack.

After a similar conversation, Derrick once again saw the human face that had been pieced together with the facial features of other people.

Now experienced, he didn't take any actions which could agitate the boy. He lowered his voice and said to Demon Hunter Colin, "Your Excellency, the face on his chest is very similar to the angel in the mural above us. It's the angel with silver hair whose feet are above a river that is connected from mouth to source. Yes, the mural which is labeled 'Rose Redemption' at the corner."

Colin was taken aback at first before he frowned.

As he paid attention and consoled Jack, he sized up Derrick from the corner of his eye.

After a few seconds of silence, he said with a suppressed voice, "Due to you mentioning this matter, you made me think of certain things."

Without waiting for Derrick to ask, he continued, "We've been studying this mural for a very long period of time and only believe that it depicts an angel leading a group of ascetics on a pilgrimage. And perhaps this group's name is Rose Redemption.

"The river, that runs from source to mouth, represents a cycle, and our interpretation of it is that this pilgrimage takes place over and over again.

"And now it may be that it is used to identify the angel.

"That's the idea you gave me, as Amon used to hide in your body."

"Why?" Derrick was at a loss.

Demon Hunter Colin stared at Jack and said, "The worm left behind by Amon had the symbol of time, and a circular river is often related to fate. Putting the two together, it reminded me of a few books that mentioned something that I'm unsure of their credibility.

"When the Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God, cast his attention on this world, 'He' had many angels around him. Among them were leaders of the angels, 'Kings of Angels' that were closest to being a god. There were a total of eight of them, and some of 'Their' names have already been lost to history. There are still records of others, perhaps simple or detailed.

"Legend has it that the sons of god were among these eight Kings of Angels.

"Among them, two Kings of Angels had the titles 'Angel of Time' and 'Angel of Fate.'"

Derrick was immediately enlightened as he asked for confirmation, "You believe that Amon is the Angel of Time and that the mural is depicting the Angel of Fate?"

"I can't be sure for now. Only the title Angel of Time has been passed down. As for the Angel of Fate, the records are relatively detailed…" Colin suddenly took a deep breath.

Immediately, he solemnly said, "Angel of Fate, Tail-devourer Ouroboros."

…

In the evening, within the Odora family's underground structure.

Emlyn White looked at the iron-black coffin and said to the ancient Sanguine inside, "Lord Nibbs, I accept the Ancestor's mission!"

Nibbs replied in his aged voice, "Very good.

"When do you want to begin? Do you have any wishes that remain unfulfilled?"

"…”

Upon hearing Lord Nibbs asking about his last wishes, Emlyn White's calves went limp, and he almost regretted it.

He stiffened his neck and said, "There's no need!

"We can begin now."

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CHAPTER 467
THE DELAYED RESPONSE

The iron-black coffin with its strange patterns lay quietly in the center, and there seemed to be hidden shockwaves in the air that seemed to be silently colliding.

Emlyn White stood in the corner and lit the candles according to the normal ritual procedures, burning the essential oils and corresponding herbal powders.

A dense and unsteady atmosphere emanated, and after recalling the requirements of "artificial sleepwalking," Emlyn lowered his head, began to enter Cogitation, and repeated the honorific name of The Fool.

"The Fool that doesn't belong to this era.

"The mysterious ruler above the gray fog.

"The King of Yellow and Black who wields good luck."

…

Amidst his monotone voice, Emlyn gradually entered a magical state. His body felt relaxed and reserved. It felt like he was in deep sleep, but his spirituality was light and energetic as it constantly spread outwards.

At this moment, he had a feeling that he was continuously drifting upwards.

In the ancient palace above the gray fog, Klein was sitting at the end of the long bronze table, tapping his fingers on the rippling light screen to his side.

He was expressionlessly watching the praying figure in amusement.

Although it was vague, Klein could tell at a glance that it was Vampire Emlyn White.

Very courageous, having the drive akin to buying a doll… Klein sighed and didn't respond.

He had previously tried to divine the purpose of the Sanguines, but he was unable to obtain any effective revelations. The only thing he was sure of was that it had nothing to do with the Aurora Order.

This piqued Klein's curiosity, but he wouldn't take the risk of responding to Emlyn White when a lofty Sanguine was beside Emlyn.

He didn't know if he could grasp traces of the mysterious space above the gray fog and threaten it like Blasphemer Amon. He had no intention to confirm it since he was dealing with an avatar of Amon back then. Yet, he was now facing a powerful Sanguine's true body.

There's no need to take risks on matters of no importance, even if I want to know the real purpose of the Sanguines… And it's not like there's no other way… Klein looked at Emlyn White in his state of "artificial sleepwalking." He said to himself with a smile, "I can delay my response…”

He planned to wait until tomorrow or the day after. He would suddenly respond when Emlyn White was without protection and when the Sanguine had given up!

However, there was a premise, which was to first use divination to confirm the degree of danger.

…

"Tail Devourer… Just like that river?" Derrick Berg suddenly thought of something.

Demon Hunter Colin solemnly nodded.

"Yes.

"It means that we may have stepped into a river that runs from its mouth to source, preventing our departure.

"Fortunately, this should only be remnants of that Angel of Fate's power. 'He' isn't hiding here."

No, it's definitely certain, and it has long since been the case… Derrick silently said to himself.

At this moment, Colin took out a dark red metal tube. He unscrewed the cap and gulped it down.

His light blue eyes quickly turned lighter, tinged with silver. In the end, his pupils seemed to turn vertical, reflecting Jack's figure.

A few sparks of silver light lit up in his eyes. They circled or collided at random in an extremely intense manner.

Ding!

Demon Hunter Colin first stabbed his sword into the ground, and with a flip of his hand, he pulled out his other sword, smearing it with golden, sun-like oil.

Noticing this action, Jack's expression immediately changed, as if he was shrouded in a thick shadow.

Before he could open his mouth, Demon Hunter Colin moved. He pulled out his sword from the ground, leaving behind a blurry figure.

The golden and silver light shone brightly, illuminating the entire underground hall. The light before the little boy was the most intense.

After a mournful scream, the darkness once again shrouded the altar.

Jack stood in his original spot, without taking even a step. However, the face on his chest had disappeared, leaving behind only a hole where his pulsating internal organs could be seen.

A few meters to Jack's side, Demon Hunter Colin genuflected, his two swords hanging down at an angle.

In front of him, the face was torn apart, reduced to scattered eyes, a nose, and a mouth.

These organs spasmed and bounced like electric shocks, and soon they were still, rotting rapidly like they were supposed to.

In an instant, Derrick felt an invisible, aqueous barrier around him silently shatter.

Almost at the same time, he seemed to have left the swift river and returned to the bank.

Looking at the gloomy underground hall and the upside-down deity statue, and at Jack, who had a distorted expression and had fainted due to the pain, Derrick felt a sense of joy and relief.

He knew that he and the others had finally escaped the cycle of repeating their lives.

Derrick was well aware that although the final solution didn't seem complicated, it might've taken dozens or hundreds of repeated attempts to find the clues and solution, without knowing any clues or the problem beforehand.

In the process, the slightest carelessness could lead to death, and Derrick had no way of knowing if a life that was lost could experience a redo, or if

they would still "revive" by the bonfire but would end up dead after escaping this predicament.

What's even more serious is that people would always repeat the same choice, which was to say that they wouldn't be able to discover the problem in the first place. Without the corresponding memories and experience, they wouldn't detect any abnormalities even if it was the thousandth time, and they would completely lose themselves in the circular river until they reach the end of their lives due to the normal flow of time in the outside world.

At the thought of such a possibility, Derrick thanked Mr. Fool wholeheartedly for restoring his memory and giving him a hint.

Turning his head to the side, he saw that Joshua and the other members of the exploratory team didn't show any abnormal reactions as they checked the surrounding area in a way that was similar to the sixth exploration.

Perhaps it will only be after returning to the City of Silver that they would realize that they've lost a part of their lives from the difference in dates… Derrick thought silently.

At this moment, Demon Hunter Colin stood up, walked back to the boy's side, and took out another small metal bottle. He then poured the thick black liquid inside onto the boy's empty chest.

The liquid quickly condensed into a translucent membrane, sticking to the wound and stopping the flow of blood.

"Haim, Joshua, the both of you are in charge of him," Colin suppressed his throbbing hand and ordered in a low voice.

To him, this was the City of Silver's hope for ridding the curse and defeating the prophecy of the apocalypse!

Phew… Derrick wanted to covertly thank The Fool, but he realized that there was no corresponding prayer gesture.

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Earl Hall.

The sumptuous dinner glistened under the light of the candles in an alluring manner.

Unlike what was imagined in the newspapers and magazines, the dinner for a great aristocratic family wasn't serious, and there was no need for silence.

This was a rare occasion for family members to gather together. While eating, they would casually chat about a variety of relaxed topics in order to communicate and solidify their relationship.

Audrey sliced a piece a steak which was produced from her ranch, observed Earl Hall's expression, and, without hiding her curiosity, she asked, "Father, did something happen to Prince Edessak recently?"

If nothing had happened, then her plan was to pretend that she had heard irresponsible rumors that didn't correspond to reality. It wasn't uncommon for this to happen among the aristocracy.

Earl Hall paused, raised his eyebrows, and asked, "What did you hear?"

There really is something! Gleaning information from her father's reaction, Audrey replied with a faint smile, "Some rumors, but they seem to be true?"

Earl Hall rubbed his temples and said, "It's not a very serious matter.

"Audrey, I know what you're thinking, so I don't have to hide it from you. This involves a relatively ordinary scandal of the royal family. To put it simply, Prince Edessak has fallen in love with a commoner girl.

"This led to the death of an aristocratic descendant. The royal family has blocked the spread of this matter, not wanting to cause too much of a commotion."

His wife took a sip of champagne and said, "It seems he isn't mature enough."

Mother is being very tactful with her criticism… It does sound suspicious… Has Prince Edessak really gotten himself involved in a dangerous situation that would bring about terrible changes to Backlund? Audrey put on a look of sudden understanding and said with a smile, "This makes me wonder, why would the story of freedom and love involve the death of an aristocratic descendant?"

Hibbert Hall kept his head lowered while slicing the tender steak and guessed with great interest, "It reminds me of the complicated love stories that are so common among the believers of the Lord of Storms. It's very common to fight for honor and for a lady."

"It's a tradition that has been placed into a museum," Earl Hall denied his eldest son's statement.

Audrey seized the opportunity and thoughtfully said, "I don't think Prince Edessak is that kind of person, and rumors have already proliferated… Maybe that's not what they really want to cover up."

"Perhaps not…" Earl Hall ruminated over these words, unconsciously frowning.

Knowing when to stop, Audrey didn't say anything else, and she naturally led the conversation in a different direction.

She planned on "probing" her other noble friends about the matter. As a girl that Prince Edessak had once courted, it was absolutely normal for her to want to know the details of the matter. Whether it was curiosity or indignation, they were enough to motivate people to make such an attempt.

…

Being unable to maintain a state of "artificial sleepwalking" for long, Emlyn White returned to reality in exhaustion. Opening his eyes, he stared at the iron-black coffin, then he said with a mixture of relief and disappointment, "Lord Nibbs, there's no response."

After a long moment of silence, Nibbs finally said in a rather hoarse voice, "Okay.

"Stay here tonight to prevent any accidents from happening."

"Alright!" Emlyn didn't try to insist otherwise.

He spent the night in worry and trepidation, but the night was so serene and unremarkable. It silently faded only when Backlund's rare winter sunshine scattered across the window.

"What bad weather," Emlyn left Odora's villa, lowered his hat, and mumbled while he got onto a rental carriage.

His destination was the Harvest Church south of the bridge.

After the carriage continued steadily for some time, Emlyn's vision suddenly blurred and he saw an endless gray fog.

Then, to his amazement, he found himself in a mysterious and majestic palace, sitting at a long, mottled bronze table.

At the very end of the long table, there was a figure shrouded in a thick gray fog, looking down at him from above.

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CHAPTER 468
THE MOON

For a moment, Emlyn White was stiff and his mind was blank, like a marble statue sitting there.

Then, he heard the figure leisurely sitting in the thick gray fog indifferently ask, "Why did you pray to me?"

Emlyn's mind buzzed and he blurted out, "It's a revelation from my Ancestor. 'She' told us through a dream that the apocalypse is approaching and that we need to make preparations. And I am key in this matter. My mission was to pray to The Fool!"

Hearing the undisguised and detailed response, Klein, who had prepared his answers, was at quite a loss on where to begin. This vampire, Emlyn White, had explained everything he wanted to know.

A revelation from the Ancestor… Didn't the ancient goddess Lilith perish in the Second Epoch, long before the Cataclysm, and have her authority taken back by the Creator? It was precisely because of this that quite a number of vampires tried to pray to the Primordial Moon, resulting in an extremely tragic outcome… Moreover, Mr. Door had also mentioned that the "The Moon" card is empty, indicating that, on the one hand, the Primordial Moon is most likely the embodiment of some other deity or powerful devil, while on the other hand, it indirectly proves that the ancient goddess Lilith has lost her Sequence 0 position, which is generally equivalent to dying… Klein instantly connected the dots.

He originally imagined that "Lilith," who responded to the Sanguine's prayers on particular matters, was a relic from the ancient goddess, such as

the "Uniqueness" of "The Moon" pathway. Thus, it would be rigid, passive, and extremely restrictive, but now, its initiative of providing a revelation had overturned his guess.

Two possibilities. One is that Lilith is being impersonated by another deity who has occupied a key point ahead of time, preventing any opponents from reaching Sequence 0 of The Moon's pathway. In essence, the entity doesn't care about the Sanguine, and the provided revelation is a kind of test. The greatest suspect is the Goddess who had snatched the title of Lady of Crimson, but "She's" already Sequence 0, corresponding to "The Star" in the Cards of Blasphemy. Why would she covet "The Moon?" Is it to foil the plans of her enemy?

The second possibility is that the ancient goddess hasn't fully perished. As long as no other powerhouse has become Sequence 0 in the Moon pathway, "She" is able to use a unique and incomprehensible method to continue surviving, waiting for a chance to make her return, just like the Dark Emperor card's description. And perhaps the Goddess had taken the title of Lady of Crimson to foil this situation to a certain extent…

Going by this logic, Lilith's recent apocalyptic revelation is "Her" struggle to revive after years of preparation. And The Fool plays a key role in "Her" revelation. If that's true, then in a certain way, it's an invitation for "cooperation"…But I'm just a Sequence 6 Beyonder, so how am I to cooperate with a yet-to-disappear ancient goddess?

Let Emlyn White join the Tarot Club? The Sanguine are a race with a long lifespan. They have existed since the Second Epoch and must know quite a number of secrets… However, that would be me taking quite a risk. Yes, it would be possible to divine whether or not to pull Emlyn into each gathering ahead of time…

Yes, there was a similar apocalyptic prophecy in the Sights in the Spirit World from Yellow Light Venithan. "He" also pointed out that the Abraham family's curse would be removed by an Apprentice who has the help of a hidden existence. This matches Miss Magician's present stage. She is an

Apprentice who has received the help of me, The Fool… That's rather interesting. Has every high-level being that's good at prophecies realized that the apocalypse is unavoidable and have seen The Fool's existence and his possible effects?

One thought after another flashed through Klein's mind, but his expression didn't change at all.

He leaned back in his chair and smiled leisurely.

"What did your Ancestor ask you to pray to me for?"

The calm voice pulled Emlyn out of his stupor, and he shook his head in a slightly dazed manner.

"I don't know…"

At this moment, Klein saw the stars behind Emlyn's chair shift quickly, turning into the symbol of the crimson moon.

As expected, the Beyonder pathway of the descendants of the ancient goddess, Lilith, points towards the "Moon"…Klein chuckled and said, "In a situation with the seven orthodox gods and so many secret existences, why would your Ancestor think that I would be the key to the apocalypse?"

The Fool's attitude finally made Emlyn White calm down, realizing that he had encountered an incredible event. He had been forcefully pulled into a magical place by a hidden existence!

"He" is The Fool…"He" isn't actually angry… Is it because I represent the Ancestor? I, Emlyn White, am indeed special. I was mentioned by the Ancestor, and I received a response from The Fool… With this in mind, Emlyn couldn't help but sit up straighter before saying in deliberation, "Honorable Mr. Fool, the revelation provided by the Ancestor is this. I, Emlyn White, will become the key in saving the Sanguine and clinching

victory against the apocalypse. And all of this will begin from my praying to you."

The meaning behind his words was: *the key to the apocalypse isn't you, but me!*

This fellow has such a "eighth-grader syndrome 1" side to him… That's right. He has always been very arrogant and feels self-important… Klein lampooned silently with a popular phrase from the past.

Amused, he said, "The same question, why me and not the seven orthodox gods or the other hidden entities?"

“…I don't know." Emlyn shook his head honestly.

Klein thought for a moment, then he deliberately said, "Actually, I think I understand your ancestor's intentions. 'She' wishes that, with my help, you're able to grow into a true high-level entity and save the Sanguine when the apocalypse happens."

"Grow?" Emlyn said in puzzlement, "As you know, us Sanguine have no way of growing on our own. Only through special ceremonies will we gain the bestowment of our elders and relics of the Ancestor that allow our advancement."

Indeed, it has to be in accordance with the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Conservation… In other words, there have to be other ways as long as the basic law is abided to… Klein chuckled.

"Your knowledge has blinded you, making you unable to see the wider world.

"Of course, this question will not be answered by me. The answer must be found by you. I will only provide you with an opportunity."

He paused for a second, then he said in a condescending manner, "Do you wish for such an opportunity?"

Without any hesitation, Emlyn got up and bowed.

"That is what I wish for!"

Heh, where did your arrogance go when facing a hidden existence? Why is there only humility? Klein secretly lampooned as he tapped the edge of the mottled long table and said, "But you have to adhere to certain matters."

"Please speak." Emlyn held back his excitement.

Klein smiled and replied, "You cannot reveal anything related to me to anyone unless you gain my permission.

"This includes the Sanguine who were previously present at the ritual."

"But…" Emlyn was somewhat unable to accept the request.

Klein asked warmly in a very certain manner, "It's likely that Lilith didn't get you to report to anyone afterward?"

This could be inferred from the fact that there was no prayer content in the revelation!

*Li…"He" directly called the Ancestor by "Her" name… It sounds like they're old friends… *Emlyn's heart trembled. He lowered his head and replied, "No."

Klein said with an unperturbed smile, "This is a secret deal, which is why I responded after you were free from surveillance. Similarly, you don't need to report this to Lilith as it will let certain people notice it."

Seeing Emlyn nod in understanding, Klein added, "If you want to be the key to saving the Sanguine, you must suffer the pain of the corresponding

thorns. For example, you will not be understood by others, be slandered, and looked down upon. You can only silently proceed forward in the darkness while being burdened by your heavy mission."

The words that were aimed at him made Emlyn White imagine a corresponding scenario.

He, who was always mocked by his kinsmen because of his fondness of dolls, had gotten lost and entered the Harvest Church. Stained with traces of shame, he, who had never been valued and thought highly of by his elders, would silently guard his race from the corner, protecting everyone without anyone knowing…

Very soon, Emlyn, who had moved himself, respectfully replied, "Your will will pass through the earth."

Klein leaned back and said very lightly, "I tacitly consented to the establishment of a secret gathering, and it is held right here.

"Are you willing to join this gathering in search for the method to become powerful to save the Sanguine?"

"I am!" Emlyn replied without any hesitation.

Klein nodded in satisfaction.

"Do you have any other requests?"

Emlyn was overjoyed. He said in a hurry, "Honorable Mr. Fool, I would like you to help me dispel the psychological cue in me. A bishop of the Church of Earth Mother…”

"I know." Klein calmly interrupted him.

He knows… As expected of a hidden existence… Emlyn's head lowered again.

Klein let out a soft chuckle.

"I can help you, but what price are you willing to pay for this?"

Above the gray fog, he had a very potent Spirit Vision, and he had previously discovered that the dark-colored psychological cue within Emlyn White's Spirit Body had at some point mostly dissipated, thinning out to the point of frailty.

Klein had intended to resolve the problem by referring to the ritual used to resolve similar problems in the Book of Secrets, but the situation now led him to believe that a secret deed ritual with the Dark Emperor card and the purification of the Sun Brooch would thoroughly disperse Emlyn White's psychological cue.

Price? Emlyn thought about it for a moment, but he couldn't think of anything that would interest a secret existence like The Fool.

Seeing this, Klein took the initiative to say, "I'm very interested in some of your Sanguine history. You can use that in exchange."

The Sanguine's history? After a moment's thought, Emlyn agreed.

"You can think about what you would like to describe first. Heh heh. Before that, you need to choose a code name from them." Klein conjured the unselected Major Arcana tarot cards on the surface of the long bronze table.

Emlyn White scrutinized the cards with interest and said, "The Moon.

"I choose 'The Moon' card!"

Footnotes:

Ch 468 Footnote 1

typically used to describe early teens who have delusions of grandeur, who so desperately want to stand out that they have convinced themselves they have hidden knowledge or secret powers

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CHAPTER 469
VAMPIRE QUEEN

Above the gray fog, inside the palace that looked like a giant's residence.

The Moon Emlyn thought hard about what part of the Sanguine's history that he should tell The Fool.

He and the Ancestor are old friends, so "He" must know what happened before the Cataclysm, so I don't need to repeat it… In the Fourth and Fifth Epoch, the glory of the Sanguine wasn't rare, and there was a lot of history to talk about, but there was only one most important point… Emlyn quickly came up with an idea.

From what he knew, The Fool was likely an ancient god before the Cataclysm. Due to certain reasons, he didn't perish and had slept till today, gradually in the process of recovering.

This explained why no such secret existence had appeared in the Sanguine records, that had a history spanning millennia, until 'His' honorific name suddenly spread.

After some deliberation, Emlyn straightened his back and said, "After the Cataclysm, the Sanguine left the center of the historical stage of the Northern and Southern Continents and became nobles of different empires and dynasties as individuals instead of as a race. They either governed a territory or guarded a castle in a key area.

"This continued until our queen, Blood Moon Queen, Auernia, who led us out of the era of darkness, became the wife of the Trunsoest Dynasty's Night Emperor. She gathered all of the Sanguine together and the Sanguine

became important supporters of the dynasty. At that time, Loen's Augustus and Feysac's Einhorn had to politely address our queen as 'Her Majesty.'

"In that era, Queen Auernia was the symbol of beauty. If there was a magic mirror that could answer questions, then the answer to 'who is the most beautiful of them all' would be her…"

The more Emlyn spoke, the prouder he became. He went from being reserved and serious to becoming extremely talkative.

*A magic mirror that can answer questions; isn't that Arrodes? I wonder if there are any members of the Machinery Hivemind who were so bored out of their minds to ask the question, 'Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of them all'…I wonder how Arrodes will answer. *Klein sat in the same posture, smiling as his thoughts wandered.

After droning on and on, Emlyn's expression turned serious.

"All of this shattered in the War of the Four Emperors. The Night Emperor perished, along with the queen. The Sanguine suffered a terrible blow, and while trying to reap the final fruits of victory, the four noble families—Augustus, Einhorn, Sauron, and Castiya—split the empire, destroying the royal family which was lacking in high-level beings. The Sanguine had no choice but to retreat to an uninhabited mountain to hide in the shadows so as to maintain the continuation of our race."

Just as I expected… The seven gods were already the seven gods during the War of the Four Emperors… Klein thought of the statue of the six gods in the Tudor ruins.

"Fortunately, the seven gods were fractured back then and the four countries attacked each other. After paying a certain price, we finally escaped the disaster." At this moment, Emlyn was in a rare state of being roused.

He looked at Klein and said, "Honorable Mr. Fool, do you have the time to listen to my description of Blood Moon Queen's deeds and the glory the

Sanguine used to have? That will be a heavy tome formed by pages of glorious expositions. I can repeat everything in them."

It looks like you can continue on indefinitely… I used to think that you were a vampire who liked puppets and didn't know much history. I didn't expect you to be so professional and academic… No wonder you always believed the Sanguine to be noble and are proud of it… This kind of guy who doesn't like going out really will delve into deep research into a topic he's interested in. Furthermore, vampires have a sufficiently long lifespan… Klein hesitated, prepared to decline Emlyn's offer in a euphemistic manner.

Although he had no lack of interest in the history, time didn't allow him to listen to them all.

"It's enough." Klein smiled and said, "I like a fair and equal exchange, so I won't let you say anything without reaping rewards. In the future, when you have the chance, you can use your relevant history to trade for what you want from me."

“…Alright." Emlyn felt lost for a moment.

This was the first time he had the opportunity to tell someone else about the glory of the Sanguine.

Normally, in order to hide his identity, he wouldn't be able to show off to the humans. As for the members of the Sanguine, all of them knew what needed to be known, and he wasn't in charge of educating the newborns.

Klein didn't say anything else and resumed his supercilious attitude.

"Alright, you can go back now."

A dark red light immediately lit up in front of Emlyn White's eyes, quickly devouring him.

After a short period of dizziness, he found that he was still sitting in the rental carriage.

Soon after, he saw an illusory goatskin parchment and gained the knowledge of how to request help from The Fool via a secret deed ritual.

When I'm free in the afternoon, I'll immediately hold the ritual at home and ask Mr. Fool to dispel my psychological cue… Emlyn was suddenly excited.

He waited until the carriage arrived at the Harvest Church before calming down and paying for the ride.

After entering the cathedral, he was relieved to see that Bishop Utravsky was there preaching to the few believers of the Church. He no longer felt as vexed as he usually felt and felt rather relaxed.

In this state, he suddenly thought of something.

Father Utravsky has never seemed to stop me from finding a way to dispel the psychological cues… What exactly is on his mind…

…

East Borough, in a greasy coffee shop.

Klein, who arrived at the scheduled time, was enjoying wheat bread with fresh pea lamb stew while he listened to Old Kohler's report of the information he had gathered over the past week.

It was a pity that there was no valuable information inside.

When Old Kohler was done, Klein thought for a moment, then he pulled out two pounds worth of bills and pushed them over.

"You already paid me just now!" Old Kohler jumped in shock and waved his hands in front of him.

Klein chuckled and said, "Within this week, I'll be heading south for a holiday. After a year of hard work, it's time to rest for a while.

"I might take two to three weeks before I return, so I'll pay you in advance. Heh heh, don't forget to help me gather information."

"Okay, okay!" Old Kohler accepted the notes with a mixture of joy and gratitude.

At this moment, he had already thought of how to spend the New Year.

He planned to buy the cured ham he had been reluctant to buy and match it with his bread.

I really can't stand the wait… Thank you, Detective Moriarty! He swallowed his saliva without realizing it.

Klein picked up his hat, hesitated for a moment, and said, "You should've noticed that East Borough has been a bit chaotic recently.

"Don't take risks just to find out more information. If you notice anything wrong, immediately hide and avoid getting yourself involved."

He was rather worried about the matter surrounding Prince Edessak, so he wanted to give Old Kohler a reminder.

"I understand." Old Kohler patted his chest and said, "I'm very timid. I won't take the risk."

"Very good," Klein praised.

Then he remembered the laundry maid, Liv, and her two daughters, Freja and Daisy, who loved to read, and wanted to change their fates before he said whilst in thought, "Watch out for Liv's family. Don't let them be bullied. If there are any outbreaks in East Borough, take them to a safe place."

"Outbreaks… You mean the workers' resistance?" Old Kohler asked, puzzled.

"More or less," Klein answered vaguely.

This was the limit of what he could reveal; otherwise, it would be very easy for him to be suspected by others or the Sealed Artifact itself.

…

In a room with large and small dolls, Emlyn White came home at noon and sat in his chair, enjoying the gloom created by the curtains.

He looked around and clenched his fists.

"I'll cheer for myself!"

With that, he rummaged for materials with spirituality and began to write the honorific name of The Fool, as well as the corresponding symbols and magic labels.

After some hustling and bustling, he tried the secret deed ritual. His spirituality gradually dissipated, as if he had arrived at an immeasurably high place.

Vaguely, he saw countless shadows of ineffable shapes, seven colors of light that seemed to contain immense knowledge, and the grayish-white fog that stood above everything.

Above the boundless gray fog, there was an ancient palace that was impossible to see clearly. Seated inside the palace was a person shrouded in gray fog.

Then, Emlyn saw a figure of golden majesty and holiness, as well as black wings that blotted out the sky behind it.

He didn't even have time to count the number of pairs of mysterious wings before he felt himself quickly floating upwards, making contact with that golden figure.

"Ah!"

He screamed miserably as he held his head and rolled on the ground, emitting green smoke from his body.

It took a while for Emlyn to calm down, and then he heard the deep voice of The Fool echo in his ears.

"Your psychological cue has been lifted."

Is this what it feels like to dispel a psychological cue? It's really painful… Emlyn sat on the floor, panting, his neatly combed hair falling in disarray.

Atop the gray fog, Klein thoughtfully nodded and said to himself, "Indeed, the Sun Brooch's purifying and dispelling effects can also harm vampires."

He had calculated in advance that the "sunlight" needed to remove the weakened psychological cue wouldn't severely damage Emlyn, so he couldn't be bothered switching to a more complicated approach. And now, the result was indeed consistent with his expectations.

After taking care of this matter, Klein took off the topaz pendant on his left wrist and planned to perform a divination.

"It is suitable to head to the Red Rose Manor this afternoon."

After chanting seven times in his mind, he opened his eyes and saw the spirit pendulum standing still and not spinning.

The difficulty of divining something that involves a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or a corresponding powerhouse is too high. I'm unable to obtain any effective revelations.… Klein sighed, knowing the gist of the matter.

Then, he started to divine if it would be suitable to head to Red Rose Manor tomorrow afternoon, but he received the same signs of failure as an outcome.

It's always said that divination isn't omnipotent, and it has now been proven… I have to decide on my own… I have to take this step; otherwise, there's no way for me to leave the stage unnoticed so as to go behind the scenes… The earlier the better, I can't delay it; otherwise, this matter might become completely impossible to recover from… As his thoughts churned, Klein came to a decision.

He immediately returned to the real world, put on his double-breasted frock coat and half top hat, and he walked out of 15 Minsk Street, heading for Prince Edessak's Red Rose Manor.

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CHAPTER 470
NAME

Outside Red Rose Manor, Klein walked out of the carriage whilst carrying his cane.

He closed his eyes and calmed himself as he looked at the red-uniformed soldiers standing guard at the door.

Since Sealed Artifact 0-08 has been making coincidences to stop the woman with the sapphire ring from meeting me, there shouldn't be any exception today. There's no need for me to worry about running into her. As long as I fool Prince Edessak with my acting, everything would be fine… Klein thought quickly and walked towards the entrance of the manor.

After being searched and handing in the gun holster and revolver, he followed a male servant's lead and walked across the gray slate road, past a fountain spewing clear spring water, and entered the main house. They arrived at the second floor and arrived outside the room that was supposed to be a solarium according to the layout.

During this entire process, Klein had his heart in his mouth, worrying that something unexpected would happen. He was afraid that the situation would develop in the worst possible manner.

Knock. Knock. Knock. After knocking gently on the door, a male servant approached the door and whispered, "Detective Moriarty has arrived."

After a full ten seconds of silence, a heavy voice came from inside the room.

"His Highness has invited him in."

The door creaked open and warmth spread outwards, with a temperature that was warmer than the hallway.

Under the watchful gaze of the two tall guards, Klein stepped onto the thick, patterned yellow carpet.

He took a few steps forward, skirting the cabinet that separated the inside from the outside, and he saw Prince Edessak sitting by the full-length windows, enjoying the rare winter sun of Backlund.

The round, impressionable face didn't have the slightest trace of a smile, and this naturally created a solemn and repressed atmosphere.

Because of the combination of the elegant fireplace and the metal pipes, the room was warmer than late spring. Prince Edessak wasn't wearing a coat, and his upper body was covered with a white shirt with cuffs which resembled blooming flowers and a pale yellow vest.

Seeing this, Klein was actually secretly relieved, because the woman wearing the sapphire ring wasn't accompanying the Prince.

Thus, he quickly stepped forward and bowed.

Edessak held a steaming cup of black tea in his hand and didn't invite Klein to take a seat.

He maintained his previous expression and asked in a deep voice, "Any results from your investigation?"

"No, my divinations, my spirit channeling, my interviews, my investigations all tell me that Talim died of a heart attack," Klein said with a heavy, painful expression with obvious signs of self-blame. "I'm just too weak in every aspect. Your Highness, you should hire a stronger and more powerful helper."

Why don't you get someone better… He added silently inwardly.

It was only then that Edessak seemed to clearly notice Detective Sherlock Moriarty's face. He felt as if he had aged considerably, as though he had been unable to sleep at ease for a long time.

It wasn't an illusion, because Klein had used his Faceless powers before he left to adjust the state of his face, making his skin look dry and lusterless. He made his beard appear messy and his eye bags bigger, darker, and more obvious.

Edessak was silent for a moment before he put down the white porcelain cup with a golden inlaid rim.

"I understand. It's indeed like forcing a square peg in a round hole…

"I will have someone else follow up on the matter. Prepare an investigation report and don't leave anything out."

Alright! Klein inwardly clenched his fist and quickly took out a folded piece of paper from his pocket.

"Your Highness, there's no need for you to wait, as I always have the habit of recording things in writing."

After instructing the attendants to take the report, Prince Edessak casually flipped through it and put it aside.

"Is there anything else you need?"

"No, Your Royal Highness, please allow me to take my leave. Ah, right, I will be heading south for some time; I want to use the warm sunlight there to melt the pain in my heart." Klein sighed in response.

"It's a New Year's custom of many in Loen." Prince Edessak nodded slightly and turned to Funkel, the old butler. "Send Detective Moriarty out and get

him a carriage."

The nearest town to Red Rose Manor is a 15 to 20 minutes walk. I'll have to hire a carriage when I get there.

"Yes, Your Highness," the old butler bowed and said politely.

Klein didn't let down his guard and quickly took his leave.

He followed the old butler all the way to the entrance of the manor and took back his underarm gun holster and his weapon.

Less than a minute later, he was seated in a Red Rose Manor carriage.

He leaned against the carriage wall and watched the manor turn smaller as the distance grew. Klein relaxed and let out a long breath, letting his hanging heart calm back down to its original position.

He knew that he had left the center of the stage.

After that, it's time to bid farewell to Backlund and head south, a complete curtain call… After that, I'll change my looks and sneak back in secret… He calmly considered his subsequent plans.

Suddenly, his spirituality stirred as his spirituality tensed up as he saw the door to the carriage quickly open and then silently close!

Before he could respond, he saw a figure quickly outline itself. It was wearing a heavy black dress and had a sapphire ring on its hand.

Sapphire ring! Upon seeing this scene, Klein, who was at the juncture of a flight or fight response, narrowed his eyes and sat back down, not daring to act rashly.

This was a terrifying person who possessed a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or was a demigod of a similar level!

This… It's really true that the more afraid you are of something happening, the higher the chances are of it happening… 0-08 or something else, what happened to the coincidences you create? Klein's spirit and body instantly tensed up as he could only watch helplessly as the figure appeared in front of him.

The lady's age was completely different from her dressing style. She looked about eighteen or nineteen, had a round face, slender eyes, and a gentle and refined temperament. Deep down, she was sweet and was an outstandingly gorgeous beauty.

She… Klein was surprised for a moment, before immediately recognizing her as he blurted out,

"Trissy!"

Isn't this the fellow who had gone from being Instigator Tris to Witch Trissy?

How did she go from being wanted to becoming Prince Edessak's woman?

How did she, a member of a the Demoness Sect, end up by Prince Edessak's side?

And she even has a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or a mystical item of a similar level!

When he looked again carefully, he saw that there was something different about Trissy. Her facial features, which weren't outstanding alone, were softer and more delicate, but when placed together, they were stunning.

Hearing his surprise, Trissy became happy instead of being alarmed. She revealed a sweet smile and said, "You know me…

"I knew you know me!

"A detective with Beyonder powers definitely pays special attention to the wanted posters!"

He, eh—she looks very happy… Klein cautiously asked with doubt and caution, "What do you want?"

He clearly remembered that the person before him wasn't a good person. Tris had single-handedly created the tragedy of Alfalfa via instigation, while Trissy had caused the deaths of many innocent civilians in Tingen City.

Trissy pursed her lips into a smile and said, "Very simple. Quickly report me to the Nighthawks, the Mandated Punishers, or the Machinery Hivemind! Get them to come here and capture me!"

Calling the cops on yourself? Th-this transvestite, eh—this woman must be insane! Klein was a bit at a loss.

He soon figured out the meaning behind her message: Trissy would rather be locked up behind Chanis Gate than stay at Red Rose Manor. She's trying her hardest to get out of here!

Simply put, she believes that this place is more dangerous and more despair-inducing than being caught by the Nighthawks and Mandated Punishers… Klein tried his best to control his expression and asked in a deep voice, "What are you afraid of?"

Trissy stood dazed for a second before she widened her eyes and said with her unfocused eyes, "There's someone manipulating my life. There are always coincidences that horrify me after they happen.

"And I'm becoming less and less like myself."

Saying this, the corners of her mouth curled up as she said, "Can you imagine? Being someone who loves those shy and cute maids, can you

imagine the pain when I wake up in the morning in the arms of a naked man?"

I can; that's why it's best to stay away from being an Assassin or Witch… Klein couldn't help but imagine such a scene, and his heart palpitated for a moment.

Trissy continued with a self-deprecating smile, "I thought that by working hard to advance, to become 'Pleasure,' that I would be able to free myself from that weird state. Hence, I sought people to help me search for the corresponding Beyonder ingredients, but the outcome only turned worse.

"Sometimes, I forget a lot of things, but they end up really happening. I endured the disgust, seduced Talim, and tried to get him to help me escape. Who knew that I ended up killing him with a curse without me even realizing it… Do you believe that?

"Heh heh, they even changed my name. They wanted me to completely abandon my past self. No! Absolutely not!

"They thought I could only overcome the coincidences for a short period of time and that I would soon get back on track. Humph, it was just an impression I deliberately created for them, so I have managed to meet you, Mr. Detective!"

Pleasure… Demoness… Ingredients… Klein suddenly remembered that in the Beyonder gathering held by Old Mister Eye of Wisdom, Isengard Stanton, there had been a person who had requested to purchase the main ingredients of the Demoness of Pleasure potion. With him being aware of the formula, he instantly noticed it on the spot, but he had chosen to ignore it. He gradually forgot about the matter with time.

So that was Trissy's helper! Was she already by Prince Edessak's side back then? Why do I somehow feel that her present smile looks so miserable but beautiful… A Demoness of Pleasure is sick… Klein took a breath, his thoughts in a jumble.

As he was organizing his thoughts, he asked casually, "What did they change your name to?"

Trissy furrowed her beautiful brows as she answered with a somewhat blank look in her eyes, "Trissy Cheek."

Trissy Cheek… Cheek… Cheek! Klein suddenly raised his head, his whole body turning numb once again, as stiff as a marble statue.

At this very moment, there was only one page of Roselle's diary that was madly reverberating in his mind.

"5th June. I obtained an ancient book. It actually mentions the Primordial Demoness's name…

"'Her' name is Cheek…"

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CHAPTER 471
KLEIN'S PREPARATIONS

Cheek…

The goosebumps on Klein's skin surfaced uncontrollably as he looked at the beautiful young lady with her misty eyes and furrowed eyebrows. The goosebumps were distinct and were accompanied with cold sweat.

At this moment, he felt as if he had returned to Tingen, back to the Blackthorn Security Company, and was about to activate his Spirit Vision to observe Megose and the baby in her womb. The fear that resulted from his instinct was so clear that it felt like a giant hand tightly gripping onto his heart.

He finally understood that the thing interfering with the gray fog and his divinations wasn't a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact or a mystical item of the same level. There was something even more terrifying hidden within Trissy's body.

The symbol of the apocalypse, the Primordial Demoness!

No, she isn't the Primordial Demoness yet. Otherwise, I would've already lost control just by being together with her, turning into a pile of squirming rotten meat!

She's in a very strange state…

Trissy's brows eased as her eyes regained their focus. As she looked at Klein, who didn't dare to move at all, she gently lifted her right hand, allowing her slender white finger to slowly slide down from the side of her

body. With a bit of grievance, seduction, and malice, she laughed and said, "If you can inform the Nighthawks, the Mandated Punishers, and the Machinery Hivemind about this matter, and I happen to meet you before they arrest me, I don't mind letting you know what true pleasure is."

Klein's gaze subconsciously followed the movement of her fingers, and all sorts of mind-blowing details surfaced in his mind.

They aren't considered big, but they are very firm… What am I thinking… What am I looking at! Is this the seductive powers of a Demoness of Pleasure? Ignoring the fact that you were once a man, even if you were a true lady, without having committed many heinous crimes in the past to lessen the psychological rejection I have, I wouldn't dare to. If you were to suddenly awaken as the Primordial Demoness, even The Fool can't handle that… Klein silently sighed, raised his head, looked at the carriage's wooden roof, and said, "Do you think that I, an ordinary Low- or Mid-Sequence Beyonder, would have the ability to escape the pursuit of the royal family? I think they've already discovered that something is wrong, and they're about to take action…"

Trissy felt somewhat smug that Klein didn't dare to look straight at her.

She chuckled softly and said, "I'll try to escape and divert the main pursuing force. Although the remaining ones are still very powerful, it's not impossible to deal with them.

"I believe that you will fight with all your might for the sake of your own life. You have great hope!"

With that, her figure quickly disappeared, as if someone had wiped it away with a rag.

This was different from Sharron, as it wasn't a return to a normal Wraith state, but a direct form of invisibility.

Bam!

The carriage door opened and then closed.

The sweet fragrance that remained drilled into his nose, and Klein retracted his gaze, his face sinking.

Even now, his arms were still trembling slightly, as if he had contracted some disease.

If it wasn't for his rich experience, even though he had faced the son of an evil god in the real world with a belly in between them, he, who knew what the name "Trissy Cheek" meant, wouldn't have been able to bear the terrifying pressure and would've collapsed on the spot. It was akin to having a rubber band stretched too tightly to the point of tearing.

It seems like Trissy still doesn't know what's happening to her body. She also doesn't know the meaning behind the name "Cheek"…Klein quickly calmed his thoughts, looked out the window, estimated the distance, and counted the time.

His spiritual intuition and corresponding experience told him that doing anything in such a situation was better than nothing!

Therefore, with the danger of being silenced at hand, he was prepared to try his best to save himself!

3, 2, 1… Klein suddenly opened his eyes and snapped his fingers.

At the edge of the road, a small fire ignited on a tree with only withered branches left. The flames quickly soared into the sky.

Several matches inside his pocket, that Klein had intentionally divided up, burst into flames, and a crimson color engulfed his black attire.

His figure disappeared from the interior of the carriage, and he walked out from the flames by the roadside.

Pa! Pa! Pa! He kept snapping the fingers on his left hand repeatedly, his figure constantly flashing through the sparse, withered forest. He "rode" the flames and rapidly arrived deep in the forest which couldn't be seen from the outside.

Then, he paused and pulled out the accessory hanging around his neck.

He always knew very clearly that there were hidden elements behind this matter. Therefore, for his visit to Red Rose Manor, he abided by the rules of a Magician. He had made some preparations beforehand, such as separating his matches and carrying a number of his mystical items on him.

Among the mystical items, the Biological Poison Bottle and the Sun Brooch were involved in the Capim and Wraith incidents; therefore, out of caution, he left them above the gray fog, As for the All-Black Eye which was left behind by Nimblewright Master Rosago, it was difficult to get past the manor guards; hence, it was met with the same treatment.

Finally, other than the three kinds of bullets—purifying bullets, demon-hunting bullets, and exorcism bullets of purification—he only brought along two mystical items.

The first was the Master Key that allowed him to pass through obstacles. The side effects of getting lost could be offset by dowsing. Furthermore, it looked like an ordinary key so it wasn't easily discovered. The other item was a key element of Klein's preparations—Azik's copper whistle.

Simply put, when he faced a danger he couldn't handle himself, he could ask for the help of a powerhouse!

After that encounter, whether I recognized Trissy or not, I am definitely on a kill list. There's a high chance that I've been targeted by 0-08. There won't be any negative effects getting Mr. Azik's help. Well, that's if 0-08 has been behind all the coincidences… Klein raised the cold ancient copper whistle and put it in his mouth, blowing on it.

Without a sound, he activated his Spirit Vision and saw the white bones that gushed out from the ground like a fountain. He saw the nearly four-meter-tall giant messenger taking form. It lowered its head and looked at him with his eye sockets burning with black flames.

That huge body gave Klein a sense of security. He took out the pen and paper he carried with him and wrote a word: "Help!"

Next, he folded the paper and stuffed it into the messenger's hanging palm.

After the messenger had disappeared, he put away the copper whistle, deliberately put on a prayer posture, and quickly chanted the honorific name of The Fool, “…Honorable Mr. Fool, my investigations have borne fruit. The woman Prince Edessak fell in love with is Witch Trissy from the Demoness Sect. She has already advanced to Demoness of Pleasure and the upper echelons have changed her name to Trissy Cheek…”

After quickly making the "report," Klein didn't bother to hide his identity and immediately took four steps counterclockwise to head above the gray fog.

Then, he retrieved the scenes of him praying, and he threw it into the crimson star symbolizing Miss Justice. He tried his best to feign a mocking tone and added in a supercilious manner that was congruent with the style of The Fool, "Cheek, hehe, that's the true name of the Primordial Demoness…”

After doing all this, Klein immediately returned to the real world, ready to run for his life.

He had only taken a few steps when his eyes suddenly lit up.

He subconsciously raised his head and saw several meteors burning with raging flames falling from the sky, tearing through the sky and enveloping the entire forest!

"This…" At that moment, the scarlet light shone into Klein's eyes, giving him an indomitable feeling.

He had never expected that the person he was up against would send meteorites from the sky to silence him!

…

On a yellowing notebook, a seemingly ordinary quill wrote:

"For unknown, inexplicable reasons, the Dallask meteor shower arrived at the planet two days early.

"A portion of them just happened to land in the forest where Detective Sherlock Moriarty was hiding. Yes, just happened!"

…

Tuesday afternoon, in Audrey's study.

The teenage girl, who was about to reach adulthood, was listening intently as Mrs. Escalante explained the connection between the intersection of Spectator and Telepathist powers with mysticism psychology. Beside her feet, Susie was sitting there attentively.

Suddenly, she saw the endless gray fog and a blurry figure in a prayer position in what appeared to be a forest.

Soon after, the words reached her ears.

Prince Edessak… The Demoness Sect… Witch Trissy… Demoness of Pleasure… Trissy Cheek… Audrey automatically filtered out the irrelevant details and noticed the most important words.

So that's the reason! The person Edessak fell in love with is a Demoness… Furthermore, many of the Demonesses are transformed men… Why do I feel

like laughing… Is this why he will bring danger to Backlund? Well, I have to warn Father… But what method or excuse should I use… Audrey tried her hardest to control her expression and gaze, but her mind wandered.

At this moment, she saw Mr Fool leisurely sitting at the end of the long bronze table. She heard "Him" say in a gentle tone with a hint of ridicule in his voice, "Cheek, hehe, that's the true name of the Primordial Demoness…"

The true name of the Primordial Demoness… The Primordial Demoness! As her mind buzzed, Audrey's expression instantly collapsed.

"What's wrong?" As an observant Telepathist, Escalante immediately noticed that something was wrong with Miss Audrey.

Audrey thought for a moment and didn't hide her concern as she said, "Ms. Escalante, I just remembered something bad. I should've told my parents before, but I forgot. It will lead to terrible and serious consequences."

For example, the destruction of Backlund, how few of the millions of people who live here, regardless of them being nobles, the middle class, or the poor, will survive… Audrey pursed her lips. Her concern couldn't be hidden in her sparkling, emerald-like eyes.

Escalante frowned and said, "Will it be too late to do it now?"

"It's better than not doing so. Ms. Escalante, please wait for me. No, you should leave first." Audrey entered her Spectator state and calmly made her decision.

Then she got up and left the study and went into the hallway.

*Father has gone to the House of Lords… Only Mother is at home… But what should I say? *Audrey frowned slightly. She didn't slow down, nor did she increase her pace. Next to her were her personal maid and her huge dog, Susie.

Gradually, she had an idea. When she arrived at the living room where her mother was, she had already made up her mind.

Taking a light breath, Audrey felt an unusual sinking sensation on her shoulders.

Then, without hesitation, she knocked on the door.

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CHAPTER 472
LATENT DANGER

Lady Caitlyn was sitting on a sofa in the activity room, with the deputy butler, butler's assistant, and the attendant of the corresponding services seated opposite her.

She was meticulous as she gave instructions on various things to take note of for the dinner banquet that night. This continued until her daughter, Audrey, came to her side.

"Mother, I have something to tell you." Audrey swept her gaze across the other people in the room.

On the way to the activity room, she had felt a slight tremor, but she didn't discover anything unusual.

Lady Caitlyn looked around and nodded.

"All of you can return later."

The activity room turned silent very quickly and even Susie was signaled by Audrey to leave.

"You should stay by my side more often and learn how to handle matters. Although you don't lack such content in your family lessons, it's still profound knowledge on how to effectively combine theory with practice," Lady Caitlyn, who looked to be in her early thirties despite being in her fifties, smiled and educated her daughter. "Alright, my little angel, what is it?"

Audrey tried to produce the elegant smile she'd practiced in etiquette class, but she found herself with a heavy, nervous smile.

She pursed her dry lips and directly said, "Mother, I've been hiding something from you and Father."

"Oh?" Lady Caitlyn tilted her head, waiting for a further explanation.

Audrey's words were a little staccato at first, but then they immediately became smooth and fluent.

"I… I'm already a Beyonder, the kind of person who possesses miraculous powers by consuming a potion."

The blonde Lady Caitlyn raised her eyebrows lightly and answered without any hint of surprise, "I know.

"Both your father and I know about it."

"Huh?" Audrey was momentarily at a loss as to how to continue.

Lady Caitlyn covered her mouth and laughed.

"You took so many mystical ingredients from the vault, and you are so naive to think that your father and I didn't notice?

"By your father's side, in this villa, and in the fief of our family, there's no lack of Beyonders. They may be a result of a simple employment relationship, or they may have been assigned by the Church of the Goddess, or they may have been members of the Hall family. His Majesty has tacitly agreed to such matters, and we have also tacitly consented to your little adventures… Sigh, you will eventually grow up and mature. Your father and I will never be able to protect you under our wings forever. You will have to face certain matters alone, so having additional powers to aid you as a trump card is good too.

"Yes, according to the general knowledge that I'm aware of, the initial stages shouldn't be that dangerous, and advancing will require one to two years, or maybe even three years. So, your father and I aren't too anxious, and we intended to wait until you become an adult to give you a word of warning so that you can stop at your present state."

No, Mother, your general knowledge is wrong. You don't know the acting method. If I have all the ingredients, then I can become a Sequence 7 Psychiatrist before the new year… Moreover, I do not wish to stop. The death of Duke Negan has made me understand that the world isn't as stable and peaceful as I thought it was. I want to have the power to protect all of you at critical moments…

*Mr. Fool is gradually recovering, and evil gods are making repeated attempts to descend. Although I'm still immature and lack the necessary knowledge, I can sense the hidden, indescribable dangers from these matters… *Audrey had always known that she couldn't avoid the problem of taking Beyonder ingredients from the vault, but she thought that perhaps by chance, her parents weren't aware of the specific effects of those items. At most, they would suspect that she was getting deeper and deeper into her mysticism enthusiast circle.

After releasing the burden in her heart, she paid no notice to her mother's exhortation and said, "Mother, I later joined a secret organization, one that's more academic and doesn't worship evil gods. Please forgive me for not being able to say its name and details, but I've already made an oath."

Without waiting for her mother to ask, she cut to the chase.

"I received word today that the commoner girl who Prince Edessak has fallen in love with is a Demoness. I don't know what kind of plot they are plotting."

The first two sentences of hers didn't contain any absolute connection. The former referred to the Psychology Alchemists, while the source of the latter was the Tarot Club, which was Mr. Fool.

Through this arrangement of sentences, every word she said was true, one that could be confirmed through divination. However, it would make people believe that her news came from the secret organization known as the Psychology Alchemists.

The smile on Caitlyn's face gradually disappeared as she solemnly asked, "Demoness?"

She didn't know much about the mysterious world, but the very word was enough to make her sense the evil and become uneasy.

Audrey quickly nodded.

"Yes, a Demoness of Pleasure.

"And what scares me even more is that her name is Trissy Cheek."

"What's wrong with that?" her mother asked, puzzled.

"A member of that organization has seen the name Cheek in an ancient book," Audrey said the lie that she had already planned for. Whether it was her tone, her words, the details of her expression, or her body language, they were all flawless. "In the Fourth Epoch or earlier, it's a name that belonged to the Primordial Demoness."

Immediately after, she gravely added, "That's an evil goddess!"

Lady Caitlyn didn't understand what the Primordial Demoness meant, but she knew exactly what an evil goddess meant.

She couldn't sit still any longer and quickly replied with a question, "Are you sure?"

“…I'm not sure." Audrey didn't doubt Mr. Fool at all, but she couldn't say so openly. "No matter what, I think it's necessary to seek the royal family,

no—get the Beyonders of the Church of the Goddess to confirm the matter. If it involves an evil goddess, it's always the right decision to be cautious."

Caitlyn looked up at her daughter in surprise.

“…Audrey, you've grown up."

If it weren't for the urgency of the matter, Audrey would've pretended to be reserved upon hearing such praise. She would first modestly wheedle, then return to her room in glee. She might even twirl into a dance.

But now, she couldn't care about that at all. She quickly let her worry and nervousness surface on her expression.

"Mother, can you help me hide the truth? I heard that the Beyonders of the Church and the royal family abhor secret organizations that aren't a part of them. Well, you can say that it was news which Father received. He should have plenty of channels for information."

Caitlyn stood up and gave her daughter a hug.

"Don't worry, neither your father nor I will involve you in this.

"Your father won't be back until evening. I'll first let the hidden guards appear, pretend that he sent a message, then I'll get the Church of the Goddess to send Beyonders to protect our family."

"Alright!" Audrey replied happily.

At that moment, she finally breathed a sigh of relief. She was exhausted from maintaining her prolonged high level of tension.

…

Looking at the few burning meteors crashing down at a high speed and enveloping the whole forest, Klein actually had the thought of waiting

helplessly for his doom in despair.

Even if he continuously used Flaming Jump, it would be impossible for him to escape the forest and the dangerous epicenter before the meteor shower landed. Moreover, the weak body of a Beyonder from the Seer pathway didn't allow the possibility of him withstanding a head-on meteor strike.

Even a zombie that wouldn't be wounded by a revolver would immediately be turned into minced meat under such an "attack." Moreover, it would become charred black… Flaming Jump… The yellow-white light shone into the depths of his eyes, quickly giving Klein, who had not given up, an idea.

In a situation that was depicted in seconds, he didn't hesitate. He did whatever that came to his mind.

Pa!

After silently calculating the distance, Klein snapped his fingers and ignited all the remaining matches in the matchbox.

A streak of crimson red light soared into the sky, quickly enveloping his figure within it.

Klein disappeared without a sound, appearing in the flames above the meteor.

Whoosh!

The meteor rapidly descended. The moment he leaped out of the flames, he was away from the meteor's vicinity, entering a region of air with frighteningly high temperatures.

At the moment when he used his Beyonder powers to jump, Klein was immune to ordinary flames even if the temperature was rather high. However, upon exiting that state, he had to do his best to avoid the flames

via Flame Controlling. Otherwise, he would suffer burn wounds and even burn to death.

In addition, the hot air wasn't within his "jump" range.

Pa!

Klein snapped his fingers again, causing the air at a critical point to ignite.

He phased into another flame, trying to avoid the first blast upon the meteorite's impact.

However, no matter how many times he tried and how many risks he took, he still couldn't escape the danger. There were only two choices: to jump to a point away from the forest and suffer the meteorite's resulting blast, or to jump around like an acrobatic, waiting for the mushroom cloud to swallow him up.

For a moment, Klein thought he could see himself being torn apart, scorched black with flames still burning over his body.

A thought flashed through his mind, and his vision suddenly changed as all the colors saturated. The reds became redder, the yellows become yellower, and the whites became whiter, just like a strange oil painting!

The "oil painting" seemed to be different from the real world, allowing Klein to watch as the meteorite "slowly" crashed to the ground.

That patch of the forest was instantly destroyed, and the ground clearly quaked a few times. Plumes of smoke that were mixed with flames rose up, forming a strange mushroom cloud.

Such an impact didn't affect Klein, because the blast simply didn't enter the superposed, still "oil-painting world."

Klein was stunned at first before he saw the human figure next to him.

The figure had bronze skin with a medium build. He wore a long black suit and a half top hat. He had a pair of aged brown eyes, soft facial features, and a tiny mole below his right ear.

"Mr. Azik!" Klein cried out in joy.

He finally knew what scene the revelation from the divination he made a long time ago corresponded to.

It corresponded to the present!

The sea of blood represented a perilous situation, and being pulled up by Mr. Azik meant being rescued because of him!

Just as Klein's words left his mouth, Azik waved his hand, grabbed his arm, and pushed his way through the deep layers of saturated colors!

…

The ordinary-looking quill was no longer writing on its own, and its surface had dimmed a little.

The solemn-looking middle-aged man with only one eye grabbed it and quickly wrote as if he was channeling a spirit.

"It was obvious that Azik Eggers had yet to recover all his memories and strength. While attempting to travel through the spirit world and the astral world, a latent danger appeared as a result of this problem. Hence, he and Sherlock Moriarty found themselves landing near Ince Zangwill and his friend."

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CHAPTER 473
FACELESS

Everything around him was like an illusion. The colors were saturated and superposed as they quickly receded.

As soon as Klein came to his senses, observed, and experienced this wonderful passage, he felt Mr. Azik's hand which was holding his hand tremble slightly.

Before he could even react, he felt a strong sense of weightlessness. His body couldn't help but plummet as he even began spinning.

The colors of red, yellow, white, and black around him faded rapidly, and Klein fell, hitting the solid ground hard. The impact left his head spinning and his internal organs churning.

Mixed into his vision were bits of golden stars as his vision was restored to normal. To his left was a bottomless dark valley that resembled the legendary Devil Abyss. On the right was a gray stone wall that continued to extend upwards, as if supporting the entire region.

There was no sun, no clouds, and no fog. Some light came from the luminescent moss growing in different places, and darkness and heaviness were the primary tones of this "world."

Klein pushed himself up with his left hand and nimbly jumped up. He found that the ground beneath his feet consisted of properly paved stone which could accommodate two horse carriages traveling in parallel. It was definitely not naturally formed.

One end of the road spiraled down into the dark crevices, while the other led to the top. From time to time, it was possible to see the domed hallways and halls inside the walls.

Klein raised his head, but he couldn't see the highest point. His vision was completely blocked by the gray stone wall.

Suddenly, he had an epiphany. He and Mr. Azik had "fallen" underground, into the ruins of an ancient civilization.

Is it another area, or are we still near Backlund? As soon as Klein thought about it, he heard Mr. Azik say in a low voice, "Leave here first. Head up."

Ah? Before Klein could understand the meaning behind his words, he saw a flash of light from the side, instantly forming an illusory door that opened outwards.

The door seemed to be made of bronze. It wasn't real enough, but it was unusually heavy. On the surface, there were countless strange patterns and indistinct symbols.

With a creak, a crack appeared in the door. Pale, bloody arms reached out from the crack, one after another. In addition, there were also greenish-black vines with baby faces and sleek tentacles with protruded eyes.

It's very similar to the effect of Miss Sharron's mystical item… While he was in thought, Klein noticed that the arms, vines, and tentacles were no longer as crazy as before. They had calmed down and stuck to the ground, completely unlike their former appearance of madly pulling a Sequence 6 Zombie into the door.

Immediately after, the gap between the doors widened, and a human figure emerged from it.

The figure wore a pure black clergy robe, and his facial features were clear and distinct like an ancient, classical sculpture.

His hair was dark gold in color, his eyes were dark blue, and he had a high nose bridge. He wore a bonnet which was popular with the elderly, and his sideburns were somewhat gray in contrast to his middle-aged appearance.

Looking at the figure's completely lifeless eye, Klein suddenly recalled the name of the person who had just arrived.

Ince Zangwill!

The former archbishop who had directed the Tingen incident and dealt heavy damage to the Nighthawks team, as well as being the owner of Sealed Artifact 0-08!

Almost at the same time, Klein turned around and, following Mr. Azik's instructions, fled towards the top of the road.

He knew full well that being a Sequence 6, he would only serve to be a burden and distraction in a clash between demigods.

In this race for time, false modesty and pretentious words were unnecessary. They would harm both him and his companion!

*Tap. Tap. Tap. *As there was nothing he could ignite underground, all Klein could do was grit his teeth and run as fast as he could. While running, he heard Azik's calm, gentle voice.

"Run all the way out of here.

"Don't worry about me. I've recalled a lot of things, and I know that I once remained in a particular Sequence for a very long period of time. That Sequence's name is Undying."

Tap. Tap. Tap. Klein circled around the cliff and entered a dark domed corridor. The walls on both sides were engraved with mottled murals.

At that moment, he heard a dignified and hoarse voice reverberate from where he previously was.

"Teleportation is prohibited here!"

A figure had arrived beside Ince Zangwill without anyone noticing. He was floating in midair in defiance with the laws of physics. He wore a gorgeous gold mask.

And Ince Zangwill didn't attack immediately. Instead, he glanced at the bend where Klein's figure had disappeared.

Sequence 4 Nightwatcher of the Church of the Evernight Goddess's pathway could grant a certain amount of bad luck to others, but Ince Zangwill, who had just silently "blessed" Klein, realized that things like Klein slipping and falling into the ravine didn't happen.

Not only that, Ince Zangwill seemed to be hallucinating as well, as he saw a thin, grayish-white fog.

Without having the luxury of time to think, he withdrew his gaze and cast it back to Azik Eggers.

Tap. Tap. Tap… Running at full speed, Klein suddenly stopped in his tracks. His spiritual intuition told him that there were people ahead of him—Beyonders! They were most likely the guards here!

After contemplating for a bit, he reached out with his left hand and wiped his face. At the same time, crisp sounds emitted from his body as his body grew seven to eight centimeters taller.

By the time his left palm left his face, he had turned into a single-eyed middle-aged man with dark golden hair and a high nose—Ince Zangwill!

Recalling the other party's demeanor, Klein used an illusion to change his clothes before quickly walking around the corner and entering a large hall.

There were four guards in dark black armor, their gazes keen.

Klein's face was calm as he walked over. He deliberately spoke in a hoarse voice and sternly said, "Someone has sneaked in here. I'm looking for him.

"Did you discover any clues?"

The leader of the guards first examined him before lowering his head and saying, "Mr. Zangwill, nothing happened here."

"Okay." Klein nodded slightly, walked past them, and left the hall.

During this entire process, although he remained highly nervous with his back drenched in sweat, he appeared to be calm and reserved. He looked no different from Ince Zangwill, be it his appearance or his aura.

Relying on his Faceless powers and his running speed, he quickly passed through three checkpoints and arrived at the end of the building.

There was an illusionary door formed by pure ghostly-blue light. Apart from that, it was completely sealed shut.

Although he was worried about the demigod battle between Mr. Azik and Ince Zangwill, Klein remained hidden in the shadows outside the room. He patiently spied for a while and found that someone had passed through the ghostly-blue light while another person had used it to leave.

He noticed that those who left had to show something that looked like a badge before they could get permission from the four guards to enter the door of light.

I don't have time to wait for the next person with a badge. I can only take the risk… The battle over there could end at any moment… Even if doesn't, the search order will be sent over here quickly… Klein quickly made his decision, once again walking into the room with the likeness of Ince Zangwill.

"Something has happened outside." He had no confidence in mimicking the former archbishop's voice, so he could only express himself with deliberate hoarseness as an indication that he had experienced an intense battle.

The guards who were left confused by the news didn't react until Klein approached them. They reached out their hands to stop him.

"Mr. Zangwill, where is your pass?"

"Don't waste any more time!" As he spoke, Klein pulled a badge from his pocket and thrust it into the man's hand.

This calm performance made the rest of the guards relax.

The moment the guard who had received the "pass" looked down, Klein suddenly lunged forward!

Just as he landed on the ground, he quickly did another roll and went straight through the ghostly-blue door!

Only then did the guard realize that the badge in his palm had rapidly faded, turning into a piece of paper.

On the top left of the piece of paper, there was a rather commonly seen blessing recently: "Happy New Year!"

…

The abyss-like crevice was filled with an illusory, pitch-black liquid. Moreover, the surface of the water was still bubbling without stopping, and many pale-skinned arms were wildly extending outwards.

Ince Zangwill had a general idea of Azik's standards, and he was neither surprised nor afraid, for he had a demigod to help him at the moment.

What worried him the most was another problem. 0-08, which was forcefully developing the story, could backfire on him at any moment.

At that moment, he swept his gaze past the corner of his eye and was shocked to find that the quill, 0-08, had left his pocket without him realizing it. It was floating in front of the gray rock wall, fervently writing lines of words.

"*…In a fierce battle, there would always be a variety of accidents, such as Ince Zangwill's belt snapping and having his pants drop."*

…

The ghostly-blue light filled Klein's eyes, constructing a passageway that overlapped with layers of light between the deep darkness and the roaming invisible creatures.

Klein didn't bother to observe his surroundings as he scrambled to the end of the passage.

He stood up, straightened his clothes, restored Ince Zangwill's stern expression, and stepped into the rippling screen of light.

After a moment of being mentally adrift, he found himself in another room, which was also occupied by quite a few guards.

"Something went wrong underground, keep an eye out. Do not allow anyone entry," Klein calmly instructed, walking towards the door at an unhurried pace.

"Yes, Mr. Zangwill!" the guards replied respectfully.

At this moment, the guard from before passed through the ghostly-blue light and shouted loudly, "There's a problem with that Zangwill from before!"

Everyone turned to look at the door, but Klein was nowhere to be seen.

Tap. Tap. Tap. The guards immediately split up into several groups to search in every direction for their target and notify their companions. The scene momentarily turned rather chaotic.

One of them had just rounded the corner when he saw Ince Zangwill's back.

Subconsciously, he pulled out his sword that coruscated with lightning and performed a forward cleave.

Oof!

The figure floated away weightlessly and became a splintered paper figurine.

At the same time, two loud bangs could be heard. Pale golden bullets passed through the visor that wasn't pulled down and accurately hit the guard's head.

Before he could even cry out, the guard collapsed to the ground with a thud, convulsing.

Klein stepped out of the shadows in the corner and expressionlessly slipped the revolver back into his underarm holster.

After burning the paper figurine, he quickly dragged the guard to an empty room and changed into black armor, switching his appearance to the fallen guard.

Then, he picked up the lightning sword and left the room, closing the wooden door behind him and running forward in a "panic."

He was going to notify every guard along the way that there was a problem with Ince Zangwill!

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CHAPTER 474
EDESSAK'S STORY

Inside the solarium of Red Rose Manor.

Edessak Augustus stood by the full-length window, looking at the indifferent Trissy with a gloomy face, and he said in a voice that was like a volcano about to erupt, "Why did you run away again?"

Trissy looked past him and beyond the window, chuckled, and answered with a question, "Did you see the meteor shower? Did you feel the trembling of the earth?"

Behind her, porcelain and other items in the cabinet had fallen onto the thick, soft carpet. The old butler, Funkel, was standing beside her.

"It's not too rare for that to happen," Edessak replied in a low voice.

Trissy raised her eyebrows slightly.

"You are very dull.

"Then let me be frank with you. I am a Demoness!"

Prince Edessak's expression didn't change at all. He turned to the old butler and said, "Guard the door and prevent anyone from entering."

"Yes, Your Highness." Funkel gave Trissy a cold look and walked out of the solarium.

When he heard the door close, Edessak exhaled slowly.

"Trissy Cheek, heh, you prefer to be called Trissy.

"I know you're a Demoness. The person who helped you purchase the Beyonder ingredients failed. What you received was provided by me!

"I don't mind that my princess consort is a Witch or a Demoness. I've even seen your wanted poster!"

Trissy was surprised at first, but she then revealed a mocking smile.

"You sure know a lot…

"Did you know that I was once a man, and that my real name is Tris?"

“…What?" Edessak's eyes widened, and he tilted his head a little, as though he couldn't believe what he had heard.

Upon seeing this, Trissy couldn't help but laugh. She laughed so hard that she frantically bent back and forth like a lunatic.

"Haha, you didn't make a mistake. I was once a man! I used to be like you, and the thing down there was longer and thicker than yours! However, the Witch potion had forcefully changed my gender!

"Are you disgusted? Does it give you goosebumps?"

She vented the words she had been repressing all this time before taking two steps forward.

Edessak instinctively retreated, his Adam's apple moving involuntarily.

"No, it's not like that… You're a real woman. There's no problem. I can definitely confirm that!" He mumbled to himself, then he raised his voice and said, "From the moment I met you, you were a real woman. I don't want to know what you were like in the past! I can pretend that nothing like this happened! What I like, what I love is the present you!"

Stunned, Trissy raised her hand to wipe away her tears of laughter.

"You're a really pathetic man.

"Do you still not understand? Our meeting wasn't a coincidence. Even your interest…”

She paused in disgust and continued, "Even your interest in me was a result of someone else's arrangement. Don't you think that everything happened too quickly? I believe in love at first sight, but I don't believe that it possesses such powerful bewitchment properties. You act like the main character in a third-rate romance novel, becoming obsessed with love from just one meeting. You fell in love with a stranger, forgetting the type of person you once liked. That's crazy!"

Prince Edessak's eyes went blank as his eyes turned agape, but he didn't speak.

His body suddenly swayed, as if he had finally awoken from a long dream.

"Y-you are indeed my type… But my reaction, it's r-really too exaggerated…”

The corners of Trissy's mouth curled up, and she turned her head to the side to let out a sneer.

"What a pathetic man, to have what you like being arranged by someone else. It's like you're a puppet on strings.

"Don't you understand? You're a person that can be sacrificed, and I, as well as being a hostage for the cooperation between the royal family and the Demoness Sect, am also a necessary disguise for this deception.

"I possess an important item of the Demoness Sect, and under your strict supervision, I can be destroyed at any time and result in the loss of the treasure. This is the sincerity of our cooperation, and once the matter is

exposed to the other three Churches or the military, the development of this matter will be very simple. Prince Edessak secretly kept a Demoness due to his lust. After knowing of his heinous sins, he shoots himself in the mouth. Then, all the problems would be covered up."

"No!" Edessak blurted out.

Then, with a twisted expression, he asked, "Why are they cooperating with the Demoness Sect?"

"How could a hostage who might be abandoned at any moment know?" Trissy gave a self-deprecating laugh. "That's the whole reason behind why I want to flee."

She lowered her head and chuckled in a low voice. Her body trembled slightly from the laughter.

After a few seconds, she raised her head once again, curled the corners of her mouth, and said, "What do you want to do with me? Strip me down and throw me onto the bed? No, you've probably formed a psychological resistance. Actually, I don't mind giving you some warmth right now. It's not a shameful thing for two poor people to comfort each other."

Prince Edessak darkened his rotund face and looked at Trissy silently for nearly a minute.

Suddenly, he closed his eyes, pointed to another side and said, "You can leave.

"Leave through that door."

Trissy raised her eyebrows in astonishment.

"You're letting me go?"

"Yes." Edessak turned to look out the window and slowly replied, "I'll stop Funkel. As for whether or not you can escape from the other pursuers, that will depend on your own strength and luck."

A dazed look flashed in Trissy's eyes a few seconds before she quickly ran towards the hidden door.

Before leaving, she couldn't help but look back.

"What about you?"

Edessak didn't turn his head, but he continued to stare out of the full-length windows as if searching for the shadows of his past.

He smiled and said, "Me? Let me live in this beautiful story and welcome its final end—good or bad."

Trissy took a breath and, without further ado, went through the secret door.

…

In a quiet room inside Saint Samuel Cathedral.

One of the thirteen archbishops of the Church of the Evernight Goddess, the person in charge of the Backlund diocese, Saint Anthony Stevenson had received an urgent telegram from Earl Hall's residence.

This bearded old man with deeply recessed eyes had an extremely clean appearance. Even though he wore a black and red archbishop's robe, he didn't give off a gloomy feeling.

However, anyone who faced him would shudder from the bottom of their hearts. It was as if their spirituality was dominated by fear, or as if they were facing an unknown existence lurking deep in the darkness which stared back at them.

Trissy Cheek… Primordial Demoness… Saint Anthony lightly patted the paper and immediately stood up.

The light around him suddenly vanished, as if swallowed up by the gloom of the room.

All the worshippers in the cathedral instantly felt the coming of night.

Everything quickly returned to normal as Saint Anthony appeared in front of the Chanis Gate beneath the cathedral.

Today, the one leading the team was the Spirit Guide, Daly Simone.

Without waiting for her to ask, Archbishop Saint Anthony instructed in a deep voice, "Make preparations. The process shall begin. I'm awakening a Sealed Artifact."

He wanted to use 0-17.

He wanted to use that terrifying Sealed Artifact to confirm and deal with the Trissy matter.

And this was the only Grade 0 Sealed Artifact stored outside the Holy Cathedral. Only two of the Church's upper echelons knew that it was in the Backlund diocese.

"Yes, Your Grace." Daly was startled for a second, then she immediately responded.

While waiting, Saint Anthony closed his eyes as a portion of 0-17's information surfaced in his mind.

"Number: 17.

"Name: XXXXXX

"Danger Grade: 0. Extremely Dangerous. It's of the highest importance and of the highest confidentiality. It is not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied.

"Security Clearance: Pope, Team A researchers, and Archbishop of the Backlund diocese (Note: When the archbishop is transferred out of the Backlund diocese, the corresponding memories have to be wiped out using Sealed Artifact 1-29).

"Sealed Method: The seal is completed through the combination of 1-29 and 1-80.

"Description: This isn't an item.

"This is a living angel.

"'Her' appearance is beautiful with black hair and eyes. Looks like a young woman, but 'Her' actual age cannot be estimated.

“…'She' doesn't have the wings recorded in canon. Just from 'Her' appearance, 'She' is no different from an ordinary person.

“…She does not have the ability to think and has lost all sentience.

“…Anyone and everything that comes close to 'Her' will completely disappear… Through divination and other methods, it can be confirmed that they're still alive but are impossible to locate. Currently, 1825 methods have been attempted, with every one of them failing.

“…0-17's range of influence will expand and contract without any pattern. Currently, it has caused more than 70 researchers to vanish."

…

"Warning: 'She' cannot be used!"

"Appendix 1: This Sealed Artifact first appeared in the Pale Era of the Fourth Epoch.

Exact year: Missing.

Exact date: Missing.

Exaction location: Missing"

"Appendix 2: Based on the information, 'She' has been awakened five times."

…

By passing on the message to search for the Ince Zangwill imposter, Klein, with the help of divination, overcame the interference of the Master Key and ran all the way to the exit given to him from the revelation.

He knew very well that with a carpet-style search, the corpse in the empty room would soon be discovered, so he had to race against time to get to the exit.

A Faceless's powers should be matched with a mystical item that can destroy corpses and clean up my tracks… Having gained true knowledge from practice, it didn't take Klein long to cross the checkpoints and patrolling teams before he arrived at the exit where the divination pointed him to.

However, what made him even more surprised was that there were no guards here, only a heavy stone door standing there by itself.

What's going on? Why is there no one guarding the exit? Was my divination misguided, or are the guards outside? As his thoughts raced, Klein found a corner and took off his armor, restoring his lightweight and agility.

Then, he came to the stone door that opened outwards and groped his way to the corner of the left wall.

After carefully checking with a gold coin, Klein took out the ancient bronze key. He leaned it against the wall and gently twisted it.

Water ripples appeared as they spread out slightly. Klein silently passed through the wall, without taking the door!

The first thing he saw was the natural light that fell from the dome, which meant that this place was really an exit.

Klein carefully stood motionless as he quickly adapted to the light. He saw neat but mottled gray stones under his feet and thick pillars in front of him.

In the middle of the hall, four hooded figures knelt around what appeared to be an altar.

Soon after, Klein heard a soft but gentle female voice.

"Mr. A, are you ready?"

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CHAPTER 475
LADY DESPAIR

Mr. A? Mr. A of the Aurora Order? Klein, who had intended to cling towards the walls and shadows and proceed towards the door, shrank back silently.

Ince Zangwill should be working with some faction of the royal family… Those who are able to excavate and hide such a large underground ruin near Backlund must be one of the main powers in the Loen Kingdom…

With Ince Zangwill and 0-08 participating in this matter, the Church of the Goddess can be ruled out. Although the people of the Lord of Storms are a bit reckless and male chauvinists, it's unlikely that they will work with the Demoness Sect. At least until now, there have been no Beyonders who appear to be of the Sailor pathway… In the same way, the Church of Steam and Machinery aren't likely suspects…

*Even the Aurora Order is involved? What are they trying to do? *

Klein leaned his back against the wall and slowed his breathing, thinking and listening to the conversation in the middle of the hall.

After a short period of silence, a hoarse voice sounded, "It's done."

The answer was so concise that Klein couldn't make out what they were planning.

The melodious and pleasant voice from before laughed in a low voice, "You don't seem to trust us very much?"

"That's right," Mr. A answered bluntly.

"Heh heh, then I'll be frank and describe our goal and why I'm seeking your cooperation." The gentle female voice didn't sound angry at all. "We've done certain things and left behind clear traces. Before we're discovered by the Churches of Evernight, Storm, and Steam, as well as the military, we must do the corresponding cleanup, and this requires your help. Yes, it seems like you don't really understand what I mean, so let me give you an example. Imagine—Imagine you performed a heinous crime like murder in a house, so what's the best way of eliminating any evidence and clues?"

"There's no need for that. It's our goal to have others witness such an act," Mr. A said indifferently.

…As expected of a member of the Aurora Order… They're all a bunch of lunatics… Klein made a preliminary identification of the speaking man to be "Mr. A" who had killed the Intis Ambassador.

“…Suppose it were me, not you." The clear, soft female voice had a faint wheezing sound.

After a second, Mr. A. replied, "Burn that house and bury all the clues there."

The clear and gentle female voice had a smiling tone.

"That's exactly what we planned. I'm in charge of 'committing arson,' while you can use this opportunity to go with this development to create a passageway or vessel, so as to allow your Lord to descend upon this world.

"And the only price you guys have to pay is to bear all the infamy and gain the most enmity from the military and the three Churches. But I don't think you would mind that."

"As long as we can welcome the return of the Lord, even if we're abhorred by every single force, we won't show any sign of cowardice." Mr. A's tone

no longer appeared indifferent and distant.

*Arson? The Aurora Order will take this opportunity to complete the ritual for the arrival of the True Creator? This is probably the third time… Why did I bump into this again… What a f*cking bad twist of fate…* Klein couldn't help but curse inwardly in Chinese.

At this very moment, he was extremely curious and wary against the things that were plotted by this particular royal family faction, Ince Zangwill, and the Demoness Sect. It was terrifying enough to even use the descent of the True Creator as a scapegoat!

Perhaps they've kept some cards up their sleeves and will eventually destroy the Aurora Order's ritual in the end and destroy all the other factions except themselves… Klein calmly thought while feeling tense.

"It appears like you have no other questions," said the gentle female voice. "This place is sufficiently well-hidden and can be used for the required set-up. You can do your ritual here at ease and won't need to worry that it'll be interrupted before you succeed. As for the things outside, we've already finished our preparations a long time ago. It's just waiting for the ignition of a 'spark.' If you still have doubts, then you can make another round of checks."

Just as Mr. A was about to speak, Klein heard a dull thud. It was the sound of the door opening.

"Who permitted you to enter? Didn't I declare that no one is to approach this area?" The gentle female voice suppressed her rage.

"Lady Despair, there's an emergency! Someone has infiltrated the basement! The higher-ups sent me to arrange for a follow-up and close the corresponding passages," a male voice with a distinct Backlund accent responded very quickly.

The so-called "Lady Despair" maintained her silence for a few seconds, as though she was communicating with an unknown existence to confirm the situation.

Finally, she said without changing her tone, "Go back inside. Don't come out again, nor allow anyone out. Wait until further notice."

"Yes, Lady Despair!" The man ran towards the stone door, with a heavy thud sounding in the background.

From the place where Klein was hiding, he could clearly see the stone door leading to the back area. He waited for seven or eight seconds before a figure of normal height and build appeared.

Phew… The man took a deep breath, stretched out his hands, and bared his teeth as he pushed open the heavy stone door with a ferocious expression.

In that instant, Klein had completely taken in the man's appearance and characteristics without missing a single detail. This was the Beyonder power of a Faceless!

That man's skin was reddish-brown, and he was clearly of Southern Continent descent. His facial features had no special characteristics, making it difficult to remember him.

Due to him gritting and baring his teeth, he revealed a portion of his teeth. The third tooth on the upper left of his mouth flickered with a golden light. It was a fake tooth.

This… Klein, with the spiritual intuition of a Seer, frowned as he felt an inexplicable sense of familiarity.

Very quickly, he used his skills to recall the source of his familiarity.

The Hanged Man had once requested the Tarot Club members to find a man with reddish-brown skin and a thick Backlund accent who had the third

tooth on his left missing.

The man's name was Baelen, and he was involved in the escape and disappearance of many colonial island slaves!

And at this moment, the man in front of Klein was almost identical to the Baelen that was described by The Hanged Man!

The disappearance of the colonial island slaves…

The many tribes of the Southern Continent vanishing into thin air…

Baelen's appearance here…

Capim, who took a large share of the underground slave trade, was protected by four Beyonders suspected to be of the Arbiter pathway. Among them, the strongest was a Sequence 6, and even a Sequence 5…

Capim constantly targeted relatively innocent girls in his abductions…

The passing of the Grain Act, the improvement of the textile machines all resulted in a large number of people losing their jobs…

Many female textile workers silently left East Borough after receiving new jobs, not leaving any clues…

The scattered dots instantly formed a line in Klein's mind, pointing directly into the depths of the earth!

What are they up to, that they need such a large number of people, as well as so many pure and innocent girls? A ritual? An extremely terrifying ritual that takes a very long period of time while being held in secret? Klein's pupils suddenly contracted.

Creak… Bang! The stone door closed and Baelen disappeared from his sight.

The hall was silent for a few seconds before Mr. A's deep and hoarse voice rang out again.

"I smell an accident. Let's begin. We need to hurry before it arrives."

Lady Despair responded slowly, "That's exactly what I was thinking.

"But I need you to send me to East Borough."

East Borough? Klein had a bad premonition.

"No problem," Mr. A answered with a lack of emotion.

Under the hood, a transparent and blurry book appeared in front of him. Accompanied by a distant and indistinct chant, he said, "I came, I saw, I record."

The book quickly flipped open and stopped at one of the pages. Soon after, it began to emit a light blue and illusory light.

The light enveloped the white-robed Lady Despair, causing her figure to blur at first, then becoming indistinct.

In an instant, Lady Despair saw countless indescribable silhouettes. She discovered lustrous brilliances which contained the bright and pure splendor of endless knowledge at the highest point.

Her body was being dragged forward by a strange force as she rapidly tore through space. Not long after, she left her original spot and arrived at a secluded, uninhabited, and filthy corner of an alley.

She pulled down her veil to cover her face and looked up into the sky. The afternoon sun had once again been obscured by clouds and fog, turning pale and dark.

The light yellow fog wasn't particularly thick, and it sank down to every corner of Backlund, giving off a slight choking sensation amidst its coldness and moisture.

It's a pity that the haze didn't reach the point when it's in its worst and calmest state… The accident that happened to Trissy, the sudden and temporary loss of control over 0-08, the appearance of Azik, the destruction previously caused by Dark Emperor, these had complicated matters, garnering the attention of others. It forced the operation to be brought forward to today… Lady Despair surveyed the area, walked out of the alley, and into the streets.

Her steps were slow, as though she were wandering in a sea of fog.

Wherever she passed, the fog would unnoticeably thicken. Tinged with an iron-black color, it silently lowered the range of one's visibility.

As she left the street, a sallow-faced tramp in an old jacket suddenly coughed violently and fell to the ground.

The two poor people close to the tramp retreated in horror, and then they covered their throats with their hands as they gasped for air. It was as if they were suffering from severe lung disease or bronchitis and could no longer breathe.

A haze which was a mixture of iron-black and pale yellow colors descended upon East Borough, the dock area, and the smoke-spewing factory district as it continued to spread throughout Backlund.

Various scenes in the distance were "drowned," and even the towering clock tower was only a pale shadow. One by one, workers and poor people felt the discomfort as they fought against the cold, and the disorderly tramps fell one after another in the woman's wake, their lives as fragile as the bubbles formed during laundry.

Lady Despair's expression was calm and gentle, as though she were finishing a work of art.

Like an ordinary person, she walked among the pedestrians as she chuckled and said in a low voice, "The Loen Kingdom's history will remember this day.

"The Great Haze of Backlund."

…

The dark valley had been completely covered by the black, incorporeal water, but 0-08 didn't stop writing.

It fabricated ridiculous and terrifying stories wherever it could land its tip on.

"*…The dropping of pants didn't affect Ince Zangwill's performance, because he was wearing a long robe, perhaps having anticipated a similar accident…*

"The Imperative Mage stunned Azik Eggers in the spot, robbing him of his two most powerful Beyonder powers at the last moment—truly a great assistant in every meaning of the word. However, the stacked door of the spirit world and the Underworld were attracted by Azik's characteristic. It began being stirred by the powers of their battle, causing unpredictable changes.

"At that moment, an unknown existence was attracted, resulting in 'Him' passing by. 'He' took this opportunity to extend his hands into the real world. Oh no! 'He' caught Ince Zangwill!"

In midair, two bloody arms which were covered in squirming flesh suddenly appeared behind the clergyman-robed Ince Zangwill!

They caught Ince Zangwill's shoulders, dragging him into the void and into the spirit world.

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CHAPTER 476
THE STRAW MEN

Light suddenly faded from where Ince Zangwill disappeared, staining the area with the richest and deepest darkness.

In the darkness, the sounds of melodic chanting could be heard. It was quiet and tranquil, hypnotic even. Even the countless pale arms flailing upwards underneath the pitch-black water seemed to slow down, no longer as frenzied as before, as if they had won redemption for their souls.

In such a "dark night," a figure walked out. It was none other than Ince Zangwill who had just been dragged into the spirit world.

Compared to before, he had lost the bonnet on his head. The clothes on his left shoulder were tattered, and a piece of flesh had been torn off. Faint yellow pus bubbled out one after another.

His eyes were no longer indifferent, but filled with pain, as if he was suffering some unimaginable torment.

The 0-08 quill continued writing.

"Some might feel regret, while others might rejoice. Ince Zangwill had the umbilical cord of the evil god which came from the baby in Megose's womb. It was from the True Creator, and through the umbilical cord, he successfully escaped from the restraints of the unknown existence and forcefully returned to the real world, but as a result, he had lost that mystical item. In addition, he would suffer the ire of the evil god's spawn from having failed to descend for a short period of time.

"This made his strength appear like some kind of commodity in a department store during a change of seasons, with only 55% left. Yes, this number is extremely accurate."

…

In a street in the depths of East Borough.

Old Kohler hurried back to his rented apartment, carrying some ham in a paper bag.

He looked around warily, afraid that those ravenous wolves around him would pounce on him and steal his New Year's gift.

He had seen wolves back when he was still in the countryside, but to his surprise, he was able to experience that familiar feeling in Backlund.

It's still too expensive. I can only split the cost with someone else and cut it into pieces… This is enough for the new year holiday. I can eat two slices of ham for every meal. Three slices, no—at least five slices of ham. I can cut some of them off and stew them together with the potatoes. I don't even need to add salt… With this in mind, Old Kohler looked at the ham in his arms, seeing the white spots mixed in with the red meat, his throat couldn't help but twitch and he swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

As he walked, he felt the fog around him grow thicker. The cathedral's clock tower that was still relatively clear in the distance was gradually swallowed by a mixture of iron-black and pale yellow colors. Even the pedestrians around him were reduced to blurry shadows once they were ten steps away.

Old Kohler suddenly felt like he has been forgotten by the world as he raised his palm to cover his nose.

"Why does the fog smell so bad today?" he muttered, and he quickened his pace.

One step, two steps, three steps. Old Kohler felt his face heat up and his forehead start to burn.

His chest tightened, his throat felt uncomfortable, and soon he was experiencing difficulty breathing.

Have I fallen ill? Damn it, I still want to have a good new year's, and now I can only send my savings to the clinic or hospital… No, perhaps I'll be fine with some sleep. I'll be fine sleeping with a blanket over me! Old Kohler silently muttered to himself as his head grew hotter and hotter and his senses became more and more muddled.

Gasp. Gasp. Gasp. He heard his own labored breathing, and his hands went limp as the bag of ham fell heavily to the ground.

Old Kohler instinctively bent down to pick it up, but he ended up falling to the ground.

He held the bag of ham and tried to keep it in his arms.

At this moment, he thought there was thick phlegm rushing up his throat, blocking it, so he fought back, making panting sounds.

Thud! Old Kohler began to see, through his blurry vision, that a few steps away, someone else had also fallen and was gasping for breath. He was about the same age as him, in his fifties, with white sideburns.

Suddenly, he understood that he was about to die.

It reminded him of his own wife and children, who, like him, suddenly got infected with the plague and died shortly after.

It reminded him of the time when he had been hospitalized. The patients in the same room were still chatting and laughing that night, but they would be sent to the morgue early the next morning.

It reminded him of the friends he had known as a tramp, many of which had disappeared over the course of the winter until they were found stiff under a bridge or some spot which was sheltered from the wind. A small number died from suddenly having food.

This reminded him of the days when he was still a decent worker, when the neighbors in the neighborhood would suddenly die like this. Some of them died from headaches, some of them died from accidentally falling into molten steel, some of them died from all sorts of painful, bloating ailments. Some of them even collapsed silently in the factories, one batch after another.

This reminded him of what he had heard from a drunk in the bar when he was scrounging for information.

"People like us are like straw on the ground, falling when the wind blows. It's even possible to fall on our own even without the wind."

The wind is coming… Old Kohler suddenly had such a thought.

He clutched the bag of ham tightly as he groped the pocket of his old jacket for the crumpled cigarette he had always been unwilling to smoke.

What he couldn't understand was why his healthy body would suddenly become ill. It wasn't like he had never experienced such a dense fog before.

What he couldn't understand was the reason for him suddenly collapsing just as his life was back on track, moving in a direction that was sufficiently nice for him. Furthermore, he had been paid in advance by Detective Moriarty to buy his long-awaited ham for the new year, and he was looking forward to tasting it.

Old Kohler fished out that crumpled cigarette, but he no longer had the strength to lift his arms again as they slammed heavily to the ground.

He used the last of his strength to shout out the words that had been building up inside of him, but he could only let the frail words linger at his mouth without producing them.

He heard his last words.

He heard himself ask, "Why?"

…

In an apartment at the edge of East Borough.

Liv hung up the last piece of clothing she had washed and waited for it to dry.

She looked at the sky outside, somewhat unsure of the time due to the thick fog which had appeared without her realizing it.

"Anyway, it's still early, and we've already done the laundry…" Liv's expression grew heavy.

It wasn't a good thing to finish work too early. This meant that they could rest, but it also meant that they didn't have enough work which would imply inadequate income.

Liv took a deep breath, turned around, and looked at her eldest daughter, Freja, who was wiping her hands and casting her gaze towards the vocabulary notebook in the opposite room.

"It's almost New Year's. Most of our clients have left Backlund and have gone on vacation elsewhere. We can't go on like this. We have to find new work."

As she spoke, she walked towards the door.

"During this period, the rich will host banquets one after another. They definitely won't have enough servants and might hire temporary kitchen cleaners. I plan on inquiring. Freja, you stay at home and pick up Daisy when the time comes. We need income, but so do the thieves, bandits, and human traffickers of those prostitutes to welcome the new year."

In the East Borough, every woman, who didn't work in the factories, had to be skilled or aggressive enough in order to survive.

Freja answered briskly, "Alright."

Her mind was already on the desk and vocabulary notebook next door.

Liv had just opened the door when she stumbled and fell to the floor.

Cough! Cough! Cough! She broke into a violent coughing fit as her face flushed red, with every joint in her body experiencing an unbearable ache.

Freja ran over in panic and squatted beside her.

"Mother, what's wrong with you? Mother, what's wrong with you?"

"It's nothing. Cough, I'm fine." Liv began to find it harder to breathe.

"No, you're sick—sick! I'll take you to the hospital immediately!" Freja tried to help her mother up.

"It's too expensive, too… expensive. Cough—Let's go to a charity hospital. A charity hospital, I can wait. It's n-not a big problem." Liv gasped a response.

Freja burst into tears and her vision blurred rapidly.

But at that moment, she felt her lungs burn, and her body went limp as she fell to the ground with Liv.

"What's the matter with you, Freja? Cough! You're sick too?" Liv shouted anxiously. "There's money, cough—in the closet, cough—in the hole in the wall. You have to be quick. Go to the hospital! Get a good—a good doctor!"

Freja tried to say something, but not a sound came out from her mouth. Her eyes slanted up to the door beside her.

It was their bedroom, their bunk beds. On top of it was her favorite table and her vocabulary notebook.

Her body suddenly began to twitch.

Liv's coughing stopped.

Within the public elementary school at the edge of East Borough, the fog still wasn't thick yet, but many students had already started to cough.

The experienced teacher on duty immediately ordered, "Quick, to the cathedral. We need to head for the cathedral next door!"

Daisy stood up in a panic and ran with the crowd to the cathedral next to the school.

Suddenly, her heart palpitated as she felt the horror of losing something important.

…*Mother*… *Freja*. Daisy turned her head sharply, wanting to rush home against the crowd.

However, she was stopped. She was caught by her teachers and forcibly dragged towards the cathedral.

Daisy struggled and screamed at the top of her lungs, "Mother! Freja!

"Mother! Freja!"

…

In East Borough, the dock area, and the factory district, the old or those with latent ailments collapsed in the fog in succession like felled trees, while those who came into contact with them felt as if they had been infected by the plague. They died quickly, and even the able-bodied adults and children also felt slightly unwell.

In their eyes, the light yellow and iron-black fog was like the descent of Death.

On the Tuesday of the last week in 1349, Backlund was shrouded in haze.

…

In the corner of the hall, Klein pressed himself against the stone wall so that he wouldn't be discovered by Mr. A.

Soon, he heard muffled groans and could smell the scent of flesh and blood.

"Give up your lives for the Lord," Mr. A's voice suddenly sounded.

Thud. Thud. The sound of figures collapsing entered Klein's ears, and a strong spirituality fluctuation appeared and constantly reverberated.

*Mr. A sacrificed his four attendants? *Just as this thought appeared in Klein's mind, illusory layers of weeping sounds could be heard. Some of them were calling out for their mothers, others coughing violently, and some moaning in pain.

As half of an expert at mysticism, Klein seemed to see a series of disgruntled and transparent figures entering the ritual one after another, followed by the years of numbness, despair, pain, and resentment from the dock area, factory district, and East Borough.

Has it officially begun? Klein closed his eyes and leaned his back against the wall, his right hand clenching and relaxing.

For him, the best thing to do at this moment was to slip out of the hall and flee into the distance while Mr. A was concentrating on the ritual.

His right hand loosened and tightened before relaxing many times in a row.

Seven or eight seconds later, Klein opened his eyes, the corners of his mouth curling upwards in an exaggerated manner.

He reached out his hand to grab the revolver, turned around abruptly, and dashed out.

Dressed in his black double-breasted frock coat, he raised his right hand and aimed at the altar.

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CHAPTER 477
THE MANY CONSIDERATIONS OF THE FOOL

The first thing Klein saw was the altar, which was surrounded by layers of light, and the tall, thin figure standing in it.

The figure took off its hood, revealing a beautiful, devilishly feminine face, with a left chest, shoulders, abdomen, and thighs all covered in squirming, sticky, disgusting flesh and blood.

His surroundings were filled with illusory, transparent shadows that brimmed with feelings such as numbness, despair, pain, and depression.

Beyond the altar, the four figures which were praying had fallen. Their skin was shriveled, and their bones were tightly wrapped, like corpses that had been eroded for many years.

At the top of the hall, rays of light pierced through the air, quickly entering the altar through the stone pillars, floor, and air that were filled with symbols and magic labels.

As soon as Klein emerged from his hiding place, Mr. A opened his eyes and looked in his direction.

His pupils were dyed with blood, and an extreme madness was contained within his cold eyes.

If it were any other Beyonder, they would've subconsciously looked away, not daring to look him in the eye. But Klein, who had faced the Eternal

Blazing Sun and met Blasphemer Amon, wasn't afraid of this. Calmly pulling the trigger, he sent a silver demon-hunting bullet engraved with many patterns flying towards the altar.

Witnessing this scene, Mr. A subconsciously wanted to raise his hand, but he stopped in the end. He watched indifferently as the silver bullet drilled into the layer of light surrounding the altar.

Silently, the patterned demon-hunting bullet melted and disappeared under the layers of radiance, engulfed in untold resentment and negative emotions.

In the end, it completely disintegrated, leaving not a single trace of it behind.

Klein's pupils shrank as he shot the rest of the revolver's bullets. The pale golden purifying bullets and the bronze exorcism bullets shot out, piercing through the radiant barrier one after another.

However, they disintegrated in the same way and disappeared without creating the slightest ripple.

Mr. A laughed hoarsely.

"It's no use, puny worm. The ritual has already officially begun, and with your strength, it cannot be broken or interrupted. Even if you're a Sequence 5 Beyonder!

"But you're also fortunate. You will live to witness the coming of our Lord, and be integrated into his body."

With that, Mr. A. ignored Klein and closed his eyes again, as if he was indeed nothing but a puny worm.

The Shepherd raised his hands in a gesture of open arms and shouted out in ancient Hermes, "The Lord that created everything;

"The Lord who reigns behind the curtain of shadows;

"The degenerate nature of all living things.

"Your devout believers pray for your coming;

"I am willing to offer my body as a vessel to bear the burden of your great will!"

Amidst the prayers, a light from an unknown source appeared above Mr. A's head, completely enveloping him.

The grievances and negative emotions that were gathered around Mr. A surged into his body like a tidal wave.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Klein snapped his fingers repeatedly and used Flame Controlling, trying his best to attack the altar, but they still couldn't resist being disintegrated against the barrier of light.

What can I do? All my other mystical items are above the gray fog. To take them out, I need to hold a ritual, which would waste at least a minute or two, and a body without protection would be very dangerous… What should I do? Klein rationally stopped his attempts and stood there, his mind racing.

Furthermore, whether it was the Sun Brooch, the Biological Poison Bottle, the All-Black Eye, or the Dark Emperor card that raised his level, none of them seemed capable of breaking through the altar's barrier!

Is waiting for Miss Justice's call for reinforcements the only thing I can do? Or do I just watch helplessly as the True Creator descends? Klein tensed up, his thoughts rapidly flying through his mind. He quickly considered the corresponding strategies.

As he considered each and every item on his body, his palms unconsciously broke out in cold sweat.

Suddenly, he thought of something!

Without having time to think about the consequences, he reached into his pocket and grabbed something that felt metallic.

Tap! Tap! Tap!

Klein took a few steps forward, jerked his arm hard, and threw the object in his palm at the altar.

With a flash of bronze, the object entered the barrier of light.

It was an ancient, simple key.

It was the Master Key.

Within the barrier of light, the brass Master Key began to decompose and melt.

And when its outer shell disappeared, the curse that was hidden within it appeared, connecting to the unknown area where Mr. Door was.

…

In Empress Borough, the opulent villa of Earl Hall.

Audrey stood by the full-length window and worriedly looked into the distance.

She saw that the fog on the horizon was gradually thickening, turning a pale yellow that was dyed iron-black as it slowly spread in her location.

"There's something wrong with that." The huge golden retriever, Susie, sat beside her and also looked at the commonly seen haze.

Yes, I hope it can be stopped in time… Audrey didn't know what the fog represented. She silently prayed to the Goddess and Mr. Fool that "They" wouldn't let the Primordial Demoness descend.

Suddenly, she noticed that the branches outside the window were beginning to shake and the glass was slightly rattling.

A wind is coming… Audrey felt inexplicably happy.

Cherwood Borough, Holy Wind Cathedral.

Terrifying storms that were visible to the naked eye suddenly appeared outside of it, and then they surged towards the east in an unimaginable hurricane.

Whoosh!

The thick, accumulated fog was blown away, and the rich yellow and iron-black colors quickly faded away.

Whoosh!

Dried branches fell to the ground as dust and dirt rose into the air, following the fog into the distance.

Whoosh!

Many of the pedestrians had their hats separate from their heads, and their bodies swayed so much that they had to hold onto trees or walls.

The sailors in the dock area felt as though they had returned to the port city and were witnessing a typhoon.

The smoke in East Borough and the factory district thinned, and the healthy population felt relieved of their slight discomfort.

Boom! Boom!

Lightning leaped and thunder rumbled.

They soon subsided, and a downpour began to cleanse the land.

"The Church of the Lord of Storms reacted rather quickly this time… It also has to do with us bringing the operation forward and not being fully prepared… Heh heh, those in the middle-class and the tycoons would've shared the same fate in this Great Smog as the commoners if it wasn't for the respective protection they received. They would all be lambs waiting to be slaughtered…" Lady Despair sat on a rental carriage as she leisurely heard the pattering of the rain on the glass windows.

Even though her plans had been ruined in a timely manner, the haze from before had caused more than 20,000 deaths according to her calculations. Furthermore, there would be the subsequent spread of the plague.

With this, I've pretty much digested most of my potion, but this is just a benefit I received as a matter of convenience… With large numbers of the population being wiped out, all this points to the Aurora Order and to the True Creator; no one could guess what the royal family really plans on doing… It's time I leave, along with the True Creator… Lady Despair thought while in a good mood.

Her whereabouts were kept secretive, and she had taken care of everything beforehand; therefore, she didn't have to worry about being surrounded by Backlund's demigods at all.

By the time they found traces of her, she would already be far away from the city!

Just as the Lady Despair was about to leave the carriage, her vision blurred and she saw a figure appear before her.

The figure sat across her. It was a young woman in a hooded classical robe, with black eyes and hair, and a beautiful but dull face.

…

After throwing out the Master Key, Klein held Azik's copper whistle, then he held his breath and waited for the results.

If things failed to develop as he imagined, with the altar's barrier remaining intact, he planned on using Azik's copper whistle to see if he could get any help from the messenger.

If that still failed, he would go above the gray fog and use all the items like the Dark Emperor card. He had to attempt every possibility until the very last second!

At this very moment, there was no crimson moon, let alone a clear full moon since it was afternoon. Therefore, Klein didn't have enough confidence in the curse contained within the Master Key, and he only hoped that the disintegration effects of the altar's barrier would threaten its very existence and cause it to react instinctively, such as communicating with Mr. Door in reverse and transmitting its cry for help to "Him."

In just a second or two, Klein saw the Master Key disintegrate into the smallest particles of light and an illusory, distorted crimson.

The crimson quickly faded as it struggled and then suddenly exploded!

In an instant, Klein lost his sense of hearing. He saw the countless figures formed from resentment and indignation all raise their heads and scream.

They rapidly transformed, tinged with a blackish-green, and grew a second skull, a third eye, or even a fifth leg…

They converged into a torrent and surged into Mr. A's body.

Mr. A suddenly opened his eyes, shock and disbelief evident amidst his indifferent blood-red eyes.

Soon after, the radiant layer of light surrounding the altar warped and collapsed.

Boom!

A huge explosion spread out from the center of the altar, setting off a terrifying storm.

Crack! The four thick stone pillars closest to the blast instantly crumbled, and the distant Klein only had enough time to duck and roll before he was sent flying by the shockwave.

Bam!

He hit the wall, flattened into a thin sheet of paper.

The subsequent wind quickly tore apart that thin piece of paper, scattering it in every direction.

Klein himself appeared in the corner, using the walls to withstand the ensuing shockwave.

The destruction caused by the Master Key exceeded his imagination!

The curse that had been forcibly melted away really did have an instinctive reaction, as it transmitted Mr. Door's roar, and the voice of this forsaken entity, who was at least at the level of an angel, contaminated the resentment and numbed the despair needed for the ritual. As a result, the altar lost its balance and embarked on a path of self-destruction!

The moment the blast calmed down a little, Klein rushed out to confirm the results.

The illusionary figure and oppressive feeling in the air had already vanished, leaving behind scattered remnants of the altar.

Mr. A had his body leaning forward as he knelt by a collapsed pillar. He was missing an arm, half a face, and a number of organs. His remaining eye was filled with bone-deep hatred.

However, his wounds were quickly covered with squirming flesh.

After that single glance, Klein didn't hesitate to run.

For him, he had achieved the ultimate goal of foiling the True Creator's descent. If he didn't leave now, was he, a Sequence 6, going to share a dinner with the Shepherd, Mr. A, to welcome the new year?

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CHAPTER 478
GRADE 0 SEALED ARTIFACT IN OPERATION

The moment she saw the stranger appear in front of her, Lady Despair materialized a sharp, crystalline ice spear and threw it at her target.

Using the force of the recoil, she attempted to break through the back of the carriage and into the street.

With regards to this sudden turn of events, she was puzzled at this strange enemy who suddenly appeared. On the contrary, she was very confused and perplexed as to how someone could find her concealed self so quickly. It was no less difficult than destroying a large city, or teleporting directly from Backlund to the Southern Continent of East Balam.

But as a Sequence 4 Demoness of Despair, she had developed herself one step at a time from when she was an Assassin. She knew that she couldn't afford to be distracted or spout nonsense at such critical moments. It wasn't too late to think about all these matters later.

Therefore, she chose to attack directly and wanted to take the opportunity to leave.

She could already imagine how the strange woman with black hair and eyes would be frozen in the layers of sparkling light left in the frosty wake of the ice spear's trajectory. She would have to struggle to break through the obstruction in order to have the strength to chase after her.

By then, she definitely would've escaped from the street and blended into the crowd.

However, the scene she was looking forward to didn't appear. As soon as the crystalline ice spear left her hand, it silently disappeared into thin air, its whereabouts were completely unknown.

Angel! The Demoness of Despair's eyes narrowed as black flames suddenly surged from her body, spreading ailments in a bid to ignite everything around her and causing a large-scale fire.

At that moment, her body trembled in a strange manner, and she froze on the spot.

She saw her left hand disappear, one centimeter at a time, as it rapidly spread upward in an unstoppable fashion.

In her eyes, the beautiful and lifeless eyes of the woman opposite her were dark and serene, as if there was a pure darkness concealed within.

"You aren't! You are…”

The Demoness of Despair's words came to an abrupt halt. Her entire body was like a sketch that had been quietly erased with an eraser, leaving no trace behind.

Her final gaze was filled with fear and despair. The seat she previously occupied was empty, as though she had never sat in it before.

The beautiful woman with the lifeless expression pulled the hood of her classical robe, and her lips moved almost imperceptibly as her figure instantly disappeared.

…

On the outskirts of Empress Borough. On a trackless public carriage.

Triss was sitting quietly in the corner, wearing a veiled hat.

She didn't flee with the help of the river by going straight to the Tussock River, nor did she head for the nearest railroad to catch a train, as everyone thought she would.

Her choice was to return to Backlund.

Only in this city with a population of over five million, with all sorts of hidden factions and numerous Beyonders, would they be able to help her escape the subsequent pursuit of the Demoness Sect!

At this moment, she felt tense, mentally, constantly wary of the terrifying old butler, Funkel.

Suddenly, her head spun.

When her vision returned to normal, she found herself having magically left the public carriage and was standing on the muddy road outside.

Trissy's pupils contracted rapidly as she looked around cautiously.

Then, she saw a black-hooded figure in a classical robe, and she noticed the black eyes hidden in the shadows.

For some reason, it was as if Trissy had returned to being an infant, so weak to the point that she couldn't put up any resistance at all.

Cold sweat dripped from her forehead, and although her legs were trembling violently, she was unable to move.

This is the scariest enemy I've ever faced… Even the high-ranking Demoness I previously met didn't give me such a feeling… Am I going to die here… Is this finally going to end after I persisted in escaping despite failing so many times… A deep sense of despair and uncontrollable sadness

filled Trissy's heart, making her feel as if she had plunged into her deepest nightmare.

Suddenly, a dim blue light flashed before her eyes, removing her "curse" of being unable to move.

Trissy looked forward again, but there was no longer any traces of that extremely terrifying figure. Everything that happened just now seemed like the most realistic illusion.

But when Trissy lowered her head, she was surprised to find that the sapphire ring on her left pinky had somehow shattered, losing all of its brilliance.

*Crack. Crack. Crack. *The remains of the ring and the gem fell off one after another.

…

Klein dodged and rolled around the collapsed stone pillar and the heavily injured Mr. A, who was in the process of healing, and he ran for the entrance opposite him.

As for the characteristic fragments which were slowly gathering from the remains of the Master Key, he didn't even take a glance at them, afraid that he would give Mr. A enough time to stop him.

He was well aware that even if he had all his mystical items and was well-prepared, he wouldn't necessarily be a match for the Shepherd, not to mention the fact that he was only equipped with Azik's copper whistle and three types of Beyonder bullets. He didn't even have a single match left.

Even though Mr. A was seriously injured, Klein didn't dare to take the risk. He had heard that the Rose Bishop, the Sequence prior to Shepherd, was extremely proficient in flesh magic. Its healing ability was in no way weaker to his ability of transferring his wounds.

Creak!

He pulled open the heavy door.

The natural light outside shone in, and the clouds in the sky were tinged with a thin yellow, and the sun was pale and dim.

Klein rushed out and found that he was in the middle of a mountain. He was surrounded by towering mountains that made the area extremely hidden.

Tap. Tap. Tap. He frantically ran and wasn't even taking the mountain trail. Instead, with his skills as a Clown, he ran down the steep slope, occasionally tumbling, and occasionally swinging up with the help of trees.

Splash!

He heard the crashing of the river. It was up ahead, just below him!

But at that moment, a strong gust of wind blew over, sweeping towards his back.

Klein made a prompt decision. His knees buckled and he rolled to the side.

Sou! Sou! Sou!

The location where he was originally standing and the direction he was moving in had a deep ravine carved out by the wind blades.

Mr. A dropped out of the wind, his body still draped with a cape squirming with fresh blood.

He pointed with his finger, and immediately, chunks of flesh flew out and swelled up in midair before suddenly exploding.

Boom!

Drops of blood and bits of flesh flew in every direction as Klein cartwheeled with his hands, dodging most of it before finding shelter behind a huge tree.

The projectiles bored bloody holes through the huge tree. Traces of corrosion began spreading in every direction from the affected area.

Back when Klein was running, he had already loaded his revolver. He was about to raise his hand and shoot Mr. A in the eyes when he saw a deep darkness appear within them.

All of a sudden, Klein knew that, although the scenery around him hadn't changed at all, he had been forcefully dragged into a dream.

He had once killed a Nightmare, a Nightmare at least… Klein maintained his consciousness and saw Mr. A phase to his side in a manner inconsistent with logic, turning into a blood-red blanket that enveloped him in a manner that couldn't be escaped from.

You want to rely on nightmares to scare me to the point of stopping my heart? A thought flashed in Klein's mind and he responded.

This was his dream. The lucid him could conjure anything!

Thus, a pure and dazzling golden sun appeared. Clear and blazing flames ignited everything in its surroundings in an instant.

Klein imagined the scene when he first saw the Eternal Blazing Sun during the dream divination!

Almost at the same time, he left the dream and heard a muffled grunt.

Mr. A took a step back, two streams of blood running from the tip of his nose.

The robe formed from flesh and blood began to slowly flow as though it was melting.

Pa!

Klein snapped his fingers and ignited the trees about thirty or forty meters away.

Beneath his feet, the long-withered weeds caught on fire, and the soaring flames enveloped his body.

Mr. A's originally unmanly beautiful face suddenly turned even more beautiful and feminine. A crystalline and weightless ice spear materialized in his hand as he threw it towards the burning trees a few dozen meters away.

As soon as Klein jumped out of the flames, his pupils reflected the transparent tip of the spear.

The tip of the spear became bigger and clearer, filling his eyes.

Klein threw himself to the side as his body became covered with a thin layer of frost.

The transparent spear then extinguished the flames, allowing the thick layer of ice to quickly spread in every direction.

Klein, who was still in midair, suddenly curled up into a ball, turning his body upside down.

He stretched out his left hand and lightly pressed on the layer of ice. He once again rose into the air and left the cold world. However, the skin on his palm was frozen at the point of contact; this resulted in him tearing off his skin with a ripping sound.

Rolling to his feet, Klein reached into his pocket and pulled out a self-made Slumber Charm.

As he was about to say the incantation, his nose suddenly started to itch and he sneezed.

Achoo! Achoo! Achoo!

His head ached and he kept sneezing, leaving him with no strength to fight back.

I fell sick? I became infected by some sort of ailment? The moment Klein realized this, he felt countless threads that were difficult to be seen by the naked eye twirl around him, wrapping him up like a mummy in a certain sense.

He wasn't unfamiliar with this kind of experience. He knew that this was the Beyonder powers of a Demoness of Pleasure.

Back then, he had relied on the use of charms to cause all parties to fall into a deep slumber. Then, relying on his uniqueness, he escaped the effects of the charm. But now, Mr. A had maintained a distance of about 20 meters.

However, Klein was no longer just a Clown. The fingers he could still move snapped and made a crisp snapping sound!

In an instant, all the "spider silk" around him was ignited, as if it had turned into a giant torch.

Klein had just jumped out of the scarlet flames when he started sneezing again, which was then followed by a fit of violent coughing. This automatically prevented the use of many of his Beyonder powers.

At this moment, the feminine gentleness of Mr. A's face disappeared, adding a little more dignity to his loftiness.

He stretched out his right hand and clenched it lightly. Klein suddenly had an inkling that if he ran, he would only be running in circles.

Mr. A, who was wearing a blood-red robe, revealed a cruel smile. An ancient book that was transparent and illusory appeared in front of him.

An ethereal, high-pitched voice rang out, "I came, I saw, I record."

Achoo! Cough! Cough!

Klein wanted to hide, but he was powerless. At that moment, he experienced, in an unprecedented manner, the power of a Shepherd. It was truly worthy of being called the most comprehensive, most flawless, and most powerful Beyonder Sequence under the level of a demigod! Even if he hadn't made any preparations, with many mystical items being unusable, for him to be suppressed to such a state without being able to fight back, it implied that there were many problems.

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CHAPTER 479
THE INEXPLICABLE SMILE

The old butler, Funkel, was fleeing across a barren field in the wilderness.

He had lost his hat, his neatly combed gray hair hung in an unkempt manner, and the outer layer of his clothes were muddy.

Huff. Puff… He paused for a moment, panting as he looked behind him. He felt slightly more at ease when he realized that there was no one around.

However, when he turned his head and was about to change direction, he discovered that a figure had appeared in front of him.

The figure wore a hooded, classical robe; its face was dull and expressionless while its black eyes were hidden in the shadows.

Funkel's pupils constricted. He opened his mouth and tried to say a word in ancient Hermes, but he was surprised to find his nose disappearing and his voice gone.

A look of despair suddenly appeared on his face. Then, like a stain in the void, his entire body was seemingly wiped clean with a cloth, and not a single trace was left behind.

…

Achoo! Achoo! Cough! Cough!

In the face of Mr. A's looming attack that spelled certain death, Klein was infected by an illness. His headache and fever made it difficult to use Flame

Controlling or Flaming Jump.

At that moment, he couldn't even produce Air Bullets.

Fear of the unknown took over his mind. The Clown's intuition for danger "saw" himself split into the smallest particles of light, perhaps taking away any chance of him reviving.

In an instant, Klein reached into his pocket and took hold of an object.

This was his answer to the most dangerous situation he could think of ahead of time!

No matter what kind of situation he was suddenly placed in, a Magician had to be prepared to a certain extent, so that he wouldn't panic in the middle of a battle.

Klein took out Azik's copper whistle, brought it to his mouth, and blew hard over the sneezing and coughing!

Without any stirring motions, he saw, through his Spirit Vision, a geyser of white bones spewing out as they rapidly sketched out the appearance of a huge messenger with black flames burning in its eye sockets.

And at that moment, the pages in the book in front of Mr. A stopped flipping, and the distant voice suddenly came to a halt.

A misty green brilliance surged out, and the bone messenger, that was almost four meters tall, cracked and crumbled into countless specks of pure light.

Behind it, the force that had caused Klein to go in circles was the first to crumble. The figure in the black double-breasted frock coat was then enveloped, turning into a statue made of yellow sand which was blown away by the wind.

However, the scattered sand were white spots, as if they were shreds of paper that had been torn to the limit.

Klein's figure appeared on the other end, genuflecting and coughing uncontrollably.

If it wasn't for the skeleton messenger blocking the blow for him, then he wouldn't have been able to suppress his ailments and use Paper Figurine Substitute!

And after that ordeal, his illness worsened to the point of him losing almost all forms of resistance.

At that moment, Mr. A, who had failed in his fatal blow, suddenly coughed in a way more violent manner than Klein.

He fell to the ground in pain, blood frothing at the corners of his mouth.

Cough! Cough! Cough!

He coughed out a pile of fragmented organs and squirming flesh. Then, with great difficulty, he opened his mouth and attempted to lick them back into his mouth to forcefully consume them.

What's going on? Klein was stunned for a moment.

But that didn't stop him from resisting a cough, raising his right hand, and aiming the revolver at Mr. A's head.

At this moment, he vaguely understood something—while Mr. A's injuries could be treated with his flesh and blood magic, the impact and backlash on his mind and spirituality couldn't be nullified through this method.

Mr. A should've switched to another Beyonder power to slowly heal the damage to his Spirit Body, but he was driven by hatred. He forcefully suppressed his injuries and chased after Klein; thus, after continuously

using the Beyonder powers that exceeded what his body could bear, his situation worsened and the latent problems flared up.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Klein fired all the bullets in the revolver. Bronze, pale gold, and silver beams of light quickly crossed the short distance between the two of them.

Unfortunately, he was unable to control his sneezing and coughing during the process. The bullets didn't all hit Mr. A, with only two of them hitting Mr. A, and one of them drilling through his forehead and the other into his torso.

Sizzle!

A sizzling sound rang out, but Mr. A's head seemed to be boneless—it was just a combination of a pile of rotten flesh. This caused the pale golden-colored bullet to sink deep into his body. It quickly came to a stop and failed to deal lethal damage. All it did was emit a golden radiance of sunshine.

Mr. A lifted his neck, and the flesh around the hole in his head writhed wildly.

He wasn't dead, not even seriously injured.

He was once the tenacious Rose Bishop!

Seeing this, Klein made up his mind. He turned around and ran, no longer making any attempts to attack. As for Mr. A, he was panting, and when he lowered his head again, he licked the bits of fragmented flesh and organs he had coughed up.

Amidst the wheezing and coughing, Klein ran in random directions, occasionally rolling.

Finally, he fled to the edge of a cliff which was over fifty meters away.

Beneath the cliff, the slightly turbid Tussock River surged incessantly. It was wide but calm.

Klein didn't hesitate and put strength into his legs and jumped.

He plummeted, feeling the weightlessness of a free fall.

His body tore through the air as he attempted to adjust his posture in midair, transforming into a standard diving motion.

Cough! Achoo!

His ailment stopped his three and a half flips midway, and the positioning of his body and palms failed to be in the correct stance.

With a splashing sound, he struck the water surface, reducing into a thin piece of white paper.

The paper figurine quickly became moist, half sinking and half floating.

At the bottom of the river not far away, Klein's figure formed as it shivered a little.

His clothes were already soaked, as were the remaining paper and bills in his wallet.

After distancing myself from Mr. A, the ailment has abated… Klein thought with a lingering sense of fear.

If his coughing and sneezing hadn't subsided at the last minute, he wouldn't have even had the time to use Paper Figurine Substitutes, and he would've suffered internal bleeding and instantly died. Of course, if he died in such a manner, he felt that he had a chance of being resurrected.

While kicking his legs to keep himself afloat, Klein created an invisible, hollow tube in his mouth, allowing it to rise out of the water and bring him fresh air.

This was the Underwater Breathing performance of a Magician!

Klein sucked in with his mouth and blew out through his nose, not letting the turbid gas he breathed out pollute the pipe by directly entering the water.

At the same time, he stealthily made his way to the shore, hoping to avoid Mr. A's subsequent pursuit.

Unfortunately, this isn't a city. The powers of a Faceless cannot be used effectively. Otherwise, once I break away, Mr A definitely wouldn't be able to find me… While swimming, Klein instinctively had this thought.

This resulted in him thinking of a problem, and that was the wind-controlling Beyonder power Mr. A previously had.

*Generally speaking, this belongs to the pathway of the Lord of the Storms… For this pathway, apart from the wind, there's also water, which means they're especially effective for underwater activities… Underwater activities… Shepherd is so all-rounded and terrifying! *Klein's heart almost stopped beating as the thought flashed through his mind.

He suddenly swam upstream, no longer concealing himself!

As soon as he emerged from the water and approached the shore, he saw Mr. A's devilishly beautiful face, covered with fish scales and gaping gills.

Mr. A, who was floating on the water surface in his bright red robe, had the corners of his mouth curled up. His eyes were filled with true hatred.

*Fight! I can only fight! I'll try to hold out until the Church's reinforcements arrive or for Mr. Azik to escape his predicament! *Without hesitation,

Klein, who had gained reprieve from his ailments, raised his right hand, ready to snap his fingers.

At this moment, the two of them simultaneously looked at the sky as though it was an instinctive reaction.

A beautiful feminine figure was quickly outlined.

The figure was hooded and in a dark robe, its eyes looking blankly at Mr. A.

Then, Klein saw Mr. A being quickly erased as though he had become a pencil drawing, wiped out rapidly with an eraser, leaving nothing but his look of indignation and despair amidst the blankness and madness etched into his mind that was the only audience present.

This… What kind of level is this!? What kind of strength is this! The moment Klein thought about it, he saw the figure turn to look at him.

It was a beautiful face, but it didn't have the slightest expression. Its black eyes were deep and dark, devoid of spirituality.

Just when Klein's heart was beating rapidly, thinking that he would disappear without a trace, without a clue as to whether he could be resurrected, the corners of the woman's mouth slowly lifted into a smile.

*A smile? *Klein was stunned, wondering if he was dreaming.

Before he could regain his senses, the figure instantly faded and disappeared from where he was. The sound of water splashing around him echoed in the air.

Puzzled, Klein swam to the shore and got out of the water. Looking around, he found that this place was unusually remote. There were no roads or living people. Only the slightly turbid river water continued flowing in an unchanging manner.

It ended just like that? Mr. A died just like that? Who was that lady just now? She was so strong that Mr. A didn't even have time to scream… And she smiled at me. Smiled… Maybe it's a "She?" However, other than figures at the level of the Pope, how could there be angels walking on the ground from the three Churches. Furthermore, a figure on the level of Pope obviously wouldn't be in Backlund… Klein couldn't believe that he was out of the danger zone.

After a moment of contemplation, he finally felt a sense of reality.

She should be a powerhouse sent by the Churches. She arrived in time and successfully saved me.

If I hadn't informed Miss Justice ahead of time, then they might not have taken such timely action. There would've been a high chance of me dying at Mr. A's hands, with the possibility of resurrection being a question…

Yes, it also has to do with me persisting on, dragging on the battle all the way until this moment.

Not bad at all…

With a sigh of relief, Klein began to look for a way out.

…

"Exile!"

The man with the gold mask pointed at Azik Eggers and threw his figure into the void, a spot no one knew.

Then, he turned around to face Ince Zangwill, who was looking at him with a frown.

"There's no time, we can't finish him off that quickly! We have to hide this area as quickly as possible. Do you want the Church to discover our

secret?" The man with the gold mask growled angrily.

Ince Zangwill put away his doubts, nodded, turned to 0-08 which had stopped writing, and grabbed it.

His figure was faltering somewhat, and by his legs were piled pants that had nearly been ripped apart in the middle of the battle.

…

Inside Red Rose Manor, Prince Edessak sat by the full-length windows with an abnormally vacant look in his eyes.

"Your Highness, please hurry." A voice sounded beside him.

Edessak's eyes turned spirited as he took a breath, picked up the revolver on the table, and pressed it against his temple. Inside it was a bullet that obliterated Spirit Bodies.

He turned his head and looked longingly out at the golf course and the strolling horses.

*Bang! *

He pulled the trigger.

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CHAPTER 480
REWARDS FOR HONESTY

In the hall where the stone pillars had collapsed, a group of Nighthawks wearing black windbreakers and silk hats appeared around the altar. The person leading the team was the Archbishop of the Church of the Evernight Goddess, Saint Anthony Stevenson.

"It was disrupted by someone?" he muttered without stopping and directly walked to the stone door that led to the interior.

Rich darkness surfaced as the stone door silently opened. Saint Anthony led some of the Nighthawks in as they delved deeper.

Along the way, they didn't discover a single guard or anything of value. It was as if this place had been forcefully swept clean.

Finally, they reached a room in the deepest recesses, but there was nothing there but walls and stone pillars. The blue door of light which was there when Klein left was long gone.

The lanterns in the Nighthawks' hands suddenly lost their light, and darkness enveloped the room.

When everything returned to normal, they found that the surrounding walls had somehow melted away. However, there were no hidden doors or tunnels behind them. It was either a thick layer of mud and rocks or the corridor they came from.

Saint Anthony was silent for more than ten seconds before saying, "Try divination.

"Search the vicinity."

…

Achoo!

Walking through the pathless cliffs and forest, Klein was saddened to realize that he had apparently really fallen sick.

The residual effects of Mr. A's Beyonder powers, combined with the fact that he was drenched during winter, gave him the shameful cold.

However, he didn't dare to stop to collect dry twigs to light a fire and dry his clothes and money. He was afraid that the Beyonders of the Church would find him.

Even though he had already gained the endorsement of Stanton Isengard from the Machinery Hivemind and obtained the status of a semi-official, this was a matter involving the Primordial Demoness's awakening and the True Creator's descent—two cases of the highest order. Therefore, he was bound to be subjected to rigorous investigations, have tea sessions with the Machinery Hivemind, Mandated Punishers, and Nighthawks to recount the whole process actively or passively.

There were two major pitfalls to this. One was that he knew people inside the Nighthawks, and although Detective Sherlock Moriarty looked quite different from the martyred Klein Moriarty, making it impossible to identify him via photographs, he had zero confidence if things were done face to face. Two, because of similar pathways, the Church of the Evernight Goddess wasn't very friendly to people and things related to Death. Back in the Pale Era at the end of the Fourth Epoch, Death had fallen under the siege of the seven gods, and Sherlock Moriarty had "summoned" a powerful descendant of Death at the critical moment. This wasn't a problem that could be explained away easily.

That high-level powerhouse was rushing to deal with Ince Zangwill and 0-08, so she didn't have time to bother with a friendly small fry like me. However, I can't be careless as a result. I should flee when it's necessary!

Yes, I can write to the Machinery Hivemind when I have a chance, stating the second reason as to why I have to temporarily leave Backlund. This way, I might still have a chance to work with them in the future. Of course, I have to secretly observe to see if the Machinery Hivemind has any strong enmity towards any descendants of Death… I wonder how Mr. Azik is doing…

Heh heh, perhaps Sherlock Moriarty might be dead in the official announcement. He sure lived up to his name and identity…

As quickly as possible, Klein tried to find a small town and blend in with the crowd while enduring the alternating fever and cold.

Only in human society could the Faceless's powers be fully expressed.

The woman who was working with Mr. A, uh—she should be a Demoness. She went to East Borough… From the looks of the ritual, there must've been a large number of deaths over there. I wonder… With the spiritual intuition of a Seer, Klein's heart suddenly felt heavy.

At this moment, all the colors in front of his eyes turned saturated, as if they had been sprinkled with oil by a deity.

The feeling was over instantly, and Klein found himself far away from where he had been, with the bronze-skinned, soft-featured Azik Eggers appearing next to him.

"Mr. Azik, are you unhurt?" He couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief.

"I am," Azik replied frankly before smiling, "but to an Undying, this isn't a big problem."

Klein calmed down and asked, "What happened to Ince Zangwill and 0-08?"

"Ince Zangwill is still alive, and he still wields that Grade 0 Sealed Artifact," Azik said as he walked.

Klein tried hard to follow him as he couldn't help but sigh.

"What a pity."

"Don't worry about it; he was severely injured," Azik solemnly said. "And most importantly, we know that he was secretly cooperating with the royal family, so we don't have to worry about not being able to find him in the future. This way, you can focus on improving yourself, and I can also try to go to a few places that I've recalled, to awaken more memories. Heh heh, your luck isn't bad. I've been secretly observing the people from MI9 and the royal family to confirm Ince Zangwill's whereabouts. One of the most important places was Red Rose Manor, so I've always been wandering around the area. Otherwise, I wouldn't have been able to rush over to save you so quickly."

Klein immediately felt a little awkward when this was mentioned.

"Mr. Azik, aren't you puzzled as to why I didn't die?"

"I often wake up after entering a coffin as well. This is something that I previously recalled," Azik said with a smile, completely unfazed by the matter. "And in my incomplete memory, although it's rare in others, it's not without precedent."

He often wakes up after entering a coffin… Often? Klein suddenly realized that the problems that he was worried about were nothing in the eyes of a real powerhouse.

As expected of an Undying of the Death pathway… Well, Mr. Azik had mentioned that he had been in this Sequence for a long time, which means

that he has long advanced… Klein thought for a moment, then he asked with concern, "Mr. Azik, Would Ince Zangwill discover that I'm Klein Moretti?"

He was afraid that Ince Zangwill would take revenge on Benson and Melissa.

"Unlikely. At most, he would believe that we knew each other long ago, or that you're my… informant, if we use the terms that the police uses." Azik recalled and said, "But that Grade 0 Sealed Artifact might notice it, but you don't have to worry."

"Why?" Klein pressed.

It was unknown what Azik had remembered, but his expression suddenly turned strange. It was as if he wanted to laugh, but at the same time, he felt horrified.

"That Grade 0 Sealed Artifact will keep attempting to write down the death of its owner. This is likely to be intrinsic to it and cannot be changed. Therefore, I doubt it would actively divulge such important information that can put Ince Zangwill at a tremendous advantage during such a critical moment—unless it involves something that it cannot avoid or explain."

Seeing that Mr. Azik was so sure about it while producing such strong justifications, Klein exhaled. It was as if he had recovered a little from the cold.

Seeing this, Azik added, "It's best if you leave Backlund for the time being. Ince Zangwill might use that Grade 0 Sealed Artifact to seek revenge again, using your fake name.

"As long as you aren't in Backlund, it should be fine. That Grade 0 Sealed Artifact's sphere of influence doesn't exceed a large city."

Just as I had predicted, there's a limit to its sphere of influence… Otherwise, Ince Zangwill could've easily hidden in a small town in the Southern Continent and leisurely arrange the fates of all his targets without having to worry about anyone finding him… Klein asked after some deliberation, "A short trip to Backlund for a day or half a day is fine, right? With the premise that I've changed my identity and looks."

With that, he rubbed his face, instantly reverting back to his appearance back in Tingen.

Azik's eyebrows twitched, and he nodded.

"It's fine."

He turned his head and looked into the distance at the spot that he could no longer see.

"It seems like I've been targeted by a powerful existence of the Church of the Evernight Goddess. It's best if you don't stay by my side, or you might be implicated. Heh heh, they're very interested in the Beyonder characteristics related to Death."

"Yes, I plan on heading out to sea. While I digest my potion, I'll be seeking mermaids. It's a condition for my advancement," Klein explained his plan.

Azik tilted his head.

"Mermaids? Could a mermaid in the form of a dead spirit work? I can find at least four."

"Probably… not…" Klein reached out and wiped his forehead.

His intuition told him that it was definitely impossible, but he planned to divine it above the gray fog to confirm it.

Without mentioning the dead mermaid again, Azik said, "If there's anything, then contact me through the messenger."

Messenger… Klein suddenly felt guilt-ridden and ashamed.

"I-it died in my battle with Mr. A. It saved my life."

Azik gave him a glance, shook his head, and laughed.

"Don't worry about it. As long as it isn't killed by a powerhouse at the level of an angel or via some special method, then as long as the Underworld still exists, it can slowly be reborn there.

"And before that, I have similar messengers numbering… Uh, I don't know how many there are either."

It sounds like there's an army of such powerful and humongous messengers? Klein turned agape, unable to say a word.

His shame faded, and he asked curiously, "Mr. Azik, where is the Underworld, or in other words, hell?"

"The spirit world. To be precise, it's a special place that the ancient Death created in the spirit world." Azik didn't hide the truth.

*Ancient Death? That should be the ancient god, Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace… So the Underworld belongs to the spirit world. No wonder the basic structure in mysticism is the real world, the spirit world, and the astral world. It doesn't contain the Underworld and the Abyss… *Klein was about to ask a question when he suddenly remembered something and quickly said, "Mr. Azik, I obtained a Card of Blasphemy created by Emperor Roselle. It contains the secrets of High-Sequence Beyonders. I believe it can help you recall more things. However, you'll have to wait a while. It's hidden in Backlund."

Klein didn't mention the bounty, fearing that it would reveal the Tarot Club's secret, the mysterious space above the gray fog, and Miss Justice; therefore, he could show his gratitude towards Mr. Azik for his help and sacrifice, in this tactful way.

Aziz looked at him in surprise, but he ultimately said nothing. He nodded and said, "When you get it back, have the messenger bring it to me. I'll immediately return it to you after I study it. Or you can copy the contents and pass it to me."

He paused for a moment as if he had thought of something. Then, he took out a glove that was so thin that it looked like it was made of human skin from his pocket and handed it to Klein.

"I've already awakened the relevant memories, so I no longer need it. Heh heh, it's an item that that pirate rear admiral left behind. I've placed some seals on it so that it wouldn't be hungry. However, every time it's used it will require you to use a human's flesh and soul to feed it; otherwise, it will devour you."

*… Creeping Hunger? The remains of a particular Shepherd? *Klein immediately recalled what the glove represented.

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CHAPTER 481
STATISTICS AND PEOPLE

In a small town on the outskirts of Backlund.

After changing into clean and dry clothes, Klein placed the wet bills on the surface of the table, one by one, waiting for them to dry naturally in the warm room.

During this process, he moved very carefully and very gently. Even his sneezing and coughing which were brought by the fever had been forcefully suppressed.

To make sure there were no mistakes, he didn't dry them by controlling a flame.

Having done all this, he walked to the corner of the hotel room, where there was a full-length mirror.

Klein's black hair was neatly combed in the mirror. He had a pair of dark brown eyes, and his face was thin and angular.

He had gold-rimmed glasses on the bridge of his nose and was beardless. He looked young but also experienced.

This was a modification of Zhou Mingrui's appearance, with the traits of a native from the Northern Continent. Moreover, this was his youthful appearance during university when he was filled with vigor, one that had yet to be made fat by society.

He intended to go back to Backlund when things have settled down a little, and then he would get himself a legal identity for his current appearance. Compared to when he left Tingen, he had no shortage of appropriate channels. For example, he had Ian at the Bravehearts Bar, Miss Sharron's circle, and Detective Isengard Stanton.

How nostalgic… Klein whispered. He busied himself with a ritual in the room where the curtains had been drawn. He planned to bring Creeping Hunger above the gray fog to study it safely.

Inside the silent, ancient palace, he appeared at the very end of the long bronze table, leaning back in his chair while holding a pair of thin gloves made of human skin.

Immediately after, he closed his eyes and extended his spirituality into the object that required sealing.

He immediately felt the hunger of the glove. It was as if it had a stomach that could never be filled, but above the gray fog, it was so tame that it didn't dare let out even the slightest bit of malice. It was like a hunting dog lying there, not daring to move at all.

Then, Klein heard cries of indignation and groans of pain.

Many distorted, hideous, and grieving faces appeared in his spiritual perception, brimming with unspeakable melancholy and madness.

These faces were deeply fused with the Beyonder characteristics of different colors and different states. Wherever Klein's spirituality spread, it would combine with the corresponding faces and use the powers it had.

*This is the way to use it? *Together with the help of divination, Klein made one attempt after another and figured out what the five souls that the Creeping Hunger could let out to graze.

The first was Faceless, but it only had the powers to change his appearance and build.

The second was Psychiatrist. He could make a target fall into a frenzied state, place a certain amount of psychological cues; and could simulate a dragon's might, intimidating individuals and groups, and creating chaos.

The third was Interrogator. It allowed the wearer of the glove to be proficient in the use of all kinds of weapons, become a demolition expert, possess the ability to focus his mind, and have the ability to pierce a target's Spirit Body.

The fourth was Nightmare. There was only one power, which was to drag someone into a dream without being detected. However, it was unlike a Beyonder of the corresponding Sequence. It was accomplished by Creeping Hunger, so the wearer could still move their bodies after entering a Nightmare state.

The fifth was Priest of Light. It allowed him to produce a halo-like effect, purifying all undead and foul creatures within a certain range. At the same time, he also had the singing ability of a Bard which could strengthen his companions, as well as summon the Light of Holiness which was weaker than Flaring Sun.

The limit is five souls, and the powers are fixed when "letting them out to graze" for the first time… This isn't something I can decide for myself. It's purely based on luck; maybe there can be three or just one… Klein thoughtfully nodded, sighed, and said to the suffering souls, "No matter what kind of people you were in the past, I will gradually free you from your imprisonment to acquire complete deliverance.

"In the future, the souls I graze will only come from people who have committed heinous and unforgivable crimes. For every such Beyonder I kill, I'll replace one of you and release you, regardless of whether I need their powers or not."

His solemn but gentle voice echoed within the ancient palace. The wailing souls quieted down, no longer writhing in a hideous fashion.

Phew… Klein exhaled, opened his eyes, tapped the edge of the ancient table with his fingers, and said to himself, *That Faceless's powers overlap with mine, so it's completely useless. Once I have something to replace it with, I'll release him first. Yes, when the time comes, I can attempt to channel his spirit and converse with him. Perhaps I might receive information regarding the high Sequences of the Seer pathway, as well as clues to the whereabouts of mermaids… No, there's no need to wait for a replacement. In a few days, I can make the attempt when I fully recover from my cold…*

The soul corresponding to the Priest of Light should be able to complete the incomplete formulas I previously obtained. Furthermore, he'll leave behind the corresponding Beyonder characteristic. That way, Little Sun doesn't need to worry about his subsequent advancements. Yes, he will be the second to be released…

As for me needing to feed a human's soul and flesh to Creeping Hunger every time it's used, that's not something I need to pay attention to. I usually wouldn't use it anyway. When using it, I'll definitely be facing a terrifying enemy. In such a battle, there's no lack of lives to cull. Even if there isn't, I can throw Creeping Hunger above the gray fog and not be worried about it's backlash, nor do I need to be afraid of harming the innocent. The worst outcome would it becoming unusable…

Putting his thoughts away, Klein tried to use the mystical item, Creeping Hunger, to divine the formula for the Shepherd potion but ended up failing.

He didn't divine the origins of Creeping Hunger, afraid that he would provoke an unfriendly existence.

Although he wasn't afraid of endangering himself due to the gray fog's isolation and obstruction, doing so could likely damage Creeping Hunger.

I'll consider trying that out when I no longer need it… Klein leaned forward and rested his elbows on the table.

He quickly recalled the previous matters and keenly noticed a detail.

After the Master Key was obliterated, its Beyonder characteristic didn't disappear. Instead, it became dots of light, trying hard to converge…

It can be assumed that the Apprentice characteristic that's formed in the end will no longer contain Mr. Door's roars.

In other words, such a method can be used to rid the mental corruption inside a Beyonder characteristic!

But the underlying problem is that there's no way to destroy a Beyonder characteristic which has solidified into an item under normal circumstances. Back then, I was relying on a ritual that could allow a true god to descend. It needed the prerequisite of a large number of innocent lives…

Also, once the All-Black Eye is shattered, the True Creator's mental corruption that's hidden within will definitely erupt. When that happens, who can withstand it? Do it above the gray fog?

As these thoughts crossed his mind, Klein remembered what could've happened at East Borough. He hurriedly conjured a pen and paper to make the appropriate divination.

After receiving the revelation, his expression sank, and slowly, he leaned back in his chair.

Below him, the endless gray fog floated in silence in a seemingly eternal unchanging fashion.

…

Audrey stood by the window, looking at the fog mixed with pale yellow and iron-black colors rapidly disperse. When she saw the heavy rain that was incompatible with winter, her heart felt more at ease.

After an unknown period of time, she and Susie waited for Earl Hall's eventual return home.

"Father, how is it?" Audrey asked with concern.

Earl Hall smiled warmly as he handed his coat and hat to an attendant.

"It's resolved, but the exact details are still unclear. My little princess, you've really helped me greatly this time. You deserve a ton of medals!"

That's good, that's good… Thanks to Mr. Fool's reminder, thanks to the risky investigation of "His" adorer… Our Tarot Club has once again stopped the descent of an evil god and saved the world! Audrey's heart was filled with pride.

Earl Hall took the towel from the maidservant's hands, wiped his face, and sighed.

"However, this time, there were still some serious casualties. To think that Backlund's smog could become so deadly… Although the statistics haven't been tabulated, I estimate that more than ten thousand people died in East Borough, the dock area, and the factory district. Furthermore, the plague is still spreading, so please try not to leave the house for the time being."

More than ten thousand people? That was a statistic Audrey could understand but couldn't imagine. Only on the anniversary of the kingdom's founding and during the parade, would she be able to see tens of thousands of people gathered together.

However, this didn't stop her heart from feeling heavy as her mood suddenly turned gloomy.

…

Daisy stood outside her apartment, watching the doctors and nurses in white coats and masks enter and carry out the bodies.

She had long known the outcome. Her expression was numb and her eyes vacant. She subconsciously moved closer to the door.

At this moment, the police officer in charge of the cordon stopped her.

"Don't go over. Do you want to be infected with the plague?"

Daisy stood there as she watched the two bodies being carried out. She saw her mother, Liv, hugging her sister, Freja, tightly. They were carried to a cargo carriage that was wrapped in black cloth and temporarily requisitioned. She then watched as they disappeared in front of her eyes as a white cloth covered them.

The carriage slowly moved towards the other end of the street.

At that moment, Daisy seemed to wake up from a dream. She turned around and ran at full speed, chasing after the carriage.

The ground was abnormally muddy after the rain. She fell and got up several times, leaving her body covered in dirt.

However, she was still unable to catch up with the carriage and could only watch it disappear around the corner.

Daisy slowed her pace, her body swaying slightly as her expression turned abnormally vacant.

She held onto the trees by the street and stared at the place where the carriage had left.

Suddenly, her entire body went limp, and she started weeping.

"Mother…

"Freja…”

The voice was soft, low, sharp, weak, and lingered.

At this moment, in East Borough, the dock area, and the factory district, tens of thousands of people were similarly crying out in grief.

…

Empress Borough, Sodela Palace.

Wearing a crown above his resolute face and thin mustache, George III sat on the throne. He stared at the earl palatine in front of him without saying a word.

"Your Majesty, the people from the three churches are waiting outside for your explanation," the earl palatine asked as sweat dripped down his forehead.

"Explanation? Prince Edessak was seduced by a Demoness, causing him to collude with a cult and attempt to rebel. That is the explanation! His schemes were exposed, and he has already committed suicide. What other explanations do they need!?" George III suddenly flew into a rage.

He took a deep breath and regained his usual solemnity.

"You tell them that anyone who obtains the corresponding aristocratic title via any means can get a seat in the House of Lords. The property restrictions needed for elections will be relaxed, and the invalid constituencies will be removed. This is to appease the factory owners and bankers.

"Similarly, the National Atmospheric Pollution Council will immediately make their final statement. The relevant bill will soon be passed, and the

minimum safeguards and working hours will appear in the form of a law!

"The Poor Law shall be reformed in accordance with their requests… The Three Churches are permitted to send their personnel into the military!"

"Your Majesty…” The earl palatine was startled.

Such a concession was beyond his imagination, especially the last one.

George III flared up again.

"Tell them this! Since they want a new order, I will give them a new order!"

"Yes, Your Majesty." The earl palatine didn't dare say anything further and left the palace.

George III sat there, unmoving for a long time as though he was a stone statue.

After an unknown period of time, his expression suddenly turned gentle.

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CHAPTER 482
RING OUT THE OLD, RING IN THE NEW

Morning of the 31st December, at the Harvest Church south of the Bridge.

Emlyn White stood in a kitchen wearing his priest robes, occasionally tossing different herbs into a large iron pot and stirring them to a certain extent.

After all the pre-prepared ingredients were tossed in, he waited patiently for another ten minutes. Then, he scooped up the ink-black liquid with a metal ladle and poured it into a glass cup and glass bottle beside him.

48, 49, 50… Emlyn glanced at the empty pot and counted the medicine he had brewed.

After confirming the quantity, he picked up a large tray and brought the bottles of dark green liquid to the hall.

In the hall, more than half of the pews had been removed, and the floor was covered with tattered blankets. Lying within them were victims of the plague who were either in deep sleep or groaning in pain.

Emlyn and Father Utravsky worked together, each carrying some of the medicine, distributing it from two ends.

The first person in the queue was a middle-aged man with a sallow complexion. He hurriedly propped himself up halfway, received the medicine, and drank it.

He handed back the bottle and said to Emlyn in gratitude, "Father White, thank you very much. I feel much better and have some strength again!"

Emlyn lifted his chin and replied disdainfully, "This is only an extremely trivial matter that isn't worth being grateful for. All of you are truly ignorant."

With that, he sped up the distribution of the potions.

After ten minutes or so, he returned to the altar of Earth Mother and complained to Father Utravsky, "You should get two more volunteers!"

Father Utravsky didn't respond. He looked at the patients and said with a gentle smile, "They should be completely healed in two or three days."

"How do you know?" Emlyn turned his head in surprise.

Father Utravsky looked down at him benevolently and said, "Herbal medicine is one of the domains of the Earth Mother. As 'Her' believer, I do know some of the basics even if I'm not part of the Earth pathway."

Emlyn tsked.

"I'm not interested in religion and know little about it."

Although I've been copying Earth Mother's bible in the recent months.… he inwardly added in a slightly resentful tone before saying, "Father, I didn't expect you to accept nonbelievers in the faith. Among them, only two or three of them are believers of the Earth Mother."

Father Utravsky smiled without minding what he said.

"They are also lives, innocent lives."

Emlyn paused for a few seconds, exhaled, and said, "Father, I've already found a way to resolve the psychological cue. Perhaps I will leave this place

soon."

Wait, why did I mention this? I was actually moved by him. What if he locks me up in the basement again? Emlyn suddenly turned nervous.

Father Utravsky's expression remained unchanged as he looked down and said to Emlyn, "Actually, you didn't need to seek out solutions. In a little while, the psychological cue will be automatically removed, and you will be free to choose whether to come to the cathedral."

"Any longer and I would've become the Mother's, no—Earth Mother's devout believer!" Emlyn blurted out.

Father Utravsky raised an eyebrow and said, feeling somewhat surprised, "I didn't compel you to change your faith.

"The psychological cue I left in you was for you to return to the cathedral every day, hoping that you would be able to fully appreciate the value of life and the joy of a harvest."

"The only effect of the psychological cue was to make me return to the cathedral?" Emlyn's expression instantly froze.

Father Utravsky nodded frankly.

"Yes."

"…"

Emlyn's mouth gaped as he slowly and mechanically turned his head to look back at the altar, looking at the Earth Mother's Sacred Emblem of Life, as if he had become a puppet that very instant.

…

In the evening of the 31st December. 2 Daffodil Street, Tingen City.

Benson entered the house, took off his hat and coat, and chuckled.

"I've booked second class tickets for the steam locomotive to Backlund on 3rd January."

Melissa, who was sitting in the dining room with several newspapers in front of her, worriedly said, "Benson, the air in Backlund is terrible. Tens of thousands of people have died from the poison and diseases caused by the smog a few days ago…"

"It's a sad and regretful matter." Benson walked to the dining room, sighed, and said, "But the two Houses have already passed the report submitted by the National Atmospheric Pollution Council. There will be legislation to regulate the emission of smoke and wastewater, so a new Backlund will welcome us. You don't have to worry too much."

Having said that, he smiled mockingly.

"When I came back from Iron Cross Street, I found a lot of factory owners or their employees from Backlund recruiting people. They said that due to the smog and plague, the factories there are suffering a shortage in manpower, so they're willing to promise that the working hours and minimum wage will be much better than the current standard, heh heh."

"You think it's impossible?" Melissa asked.

"When more and more people flock to Backlund, it will be impossible unless both Houses pass the corresponding laws directly." Benson spread his hands and pointed to the table. "Well, it's time to receive the new year."

There were three sets of forks and knives, three empty porcelain plates and three cups on the table.

Three cups. One for beer, two for ginger beer.

…

In the evening of 31st December.

Dressed to the nines, Audrey stood inside a lounge, waiting for the start of the New Year's Party. However, one couldn't see the excitement, exuberance, and joy on her face despite the fact that she was about to become an adult.

In front of her was a newspaper. On it was written:

“…According to preliminary estimates, a total of over 21,000 people died in the fog, and the subsequent plague took the lives of close to 40,000 people. Among the deceased were young children, healthy young men, and women…”

Phew. Audrey couldn't help but close her eyes.

Just then, her father, Earl Hall, and her mother, Lady Caitlyn, knocked on the door and said in unison, "Your beauty surpasses everyone tonight. Darling, it's time. The queen is waiting for you."

Audrey slowly breathed out and wore an elegant and beautiful smile. She then walked out of the lounge and entered the party's hall, under the company of her parents.

She walked all the way up to the front of the dais and, under the gaze of many, handed her white, muslin-gloved hand to the queen.

The queen led her to the edge of the dais as they faced all the guests.

After a short pause, the queen smiled and said, "Although this is a dark period in Backlund's history, we still have a gem that can illuminate the entire city. Her wisdom, her beauty, her character, her etiquette, are all impeccable.

"Today, I will formally introduce her to you.

"Lady Audrey Hall."

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Outside the window, the fireworks exploded into a dreamy light.

On the last night of 1349, Audrey officially came of age and was presented to society.

…

In the afternoon of 3rd January 1350.

On the outskirts of East Borough, in a newly opened cemetery.

Using divination, Klein found the graves of Old Kohler and Liv.

This wasn't a grave in the truest sense of the word, but rather a niche where an urn was stored. They went on, row after row, stacked one above another.

Standing there, Klein saw that not only was there no photograph or epitaph on Old Kohler's niche, but even his name was missing.

Similar situations weren't uncommon. There were too many ownerless ashes whose relatives and friends couldn't be located. Their names, looks, and whatever experiences they had were unknown, nor did they garner the interest of anyone. They were only distinguished by the numbers on the niches.

Klein closed his eyes, pulled out a slip of paper, shook it into a piece of metal, and carved a word on the niche's door: "Kohler."

Then, he added an epitaph: "He was a good worker. He had a wife, a son, and a daughter. He worked hard to live."

He withdrew his wrist, and with a shake of his wrist, the black-haired, brown-eyed, and emaciated Klein let the paper burn in his hands, as if it was a memorial service to all the souls residing in the area.

Instead of appearing to help Daisy, who had lost her mother and sister, he anonymously wrote to Reporter Mike Joseph, describing the girl's predicament in detail, so as not to implicate her in his own affairs.

Mike had met Daisy, knew about her, and had enthusiastically promoted the establishment of a corresponding charity fund. Therefore, Klein believed that he could help her receive more help so that she could complete her basic studies and find a stable job that could support her.

Taking two steps back, Klein looked around, taking in the names, photos, and even the victims who had those missing.

He raised his head, let out a long breath, turned around, and left the cemetery.

On the steam locomotive to Backlund, Melissa was engrossed in her textbooks, and Benson was soon chatting with the passengers around him.

"It's too expensive, just too expensive. A whole ten soli, half a pound!" A burly man who wasn't even thirty sighed from the bottom of his heart. "If it weren't for the fact that I couldn't buy a third-class seat or a boat ticket recently, I wouldn't have spent this money at all. This is equivalent to half a week's worth of my salary!"

"Indeed, there are too many people heading to Backlund after the new year," Benson agreed.

The burly man wiped off his heartbroken expression and said expectantly, "Because they promised me 21 soli a week and that I wouldn't need to work more than 12 hours a day, we signed a contract!

"When I receive my first payment and rent a house, my wife will come to Backlund, and she'll be able to get a good job, a job that pays about 12 or 13 soli a week. It's said that Backlund is in dire need of people! When the time comes, ah, we'll earn a total of over a pound and a half a week, and we'll be able to eat meat frequently!"

"Your wish will definitely be achieved. The king has already signed the bill, passing the law for a minimum wage and maximum working hours," Benson sincerely wished him well before smiling. "This is the Land of Hope."

Woo!

The steam locomotive brought countless hopeful people to Backlund. The sky was still bright, and the fog in the air had thinned a lot. The gas lamps on the platform were no longer lit that early.

Experienced, Benson protected his sister and wallet before leaving the station with their suitcases while following the crowd.

Suddenly, they simultaneously felt a gaze sweep past them.

Tracing the gaze, Benson and Melissa saw a young gentleman with neat black hair and dark brown eyes.

The gentleman with the gold-rimmed glasses pressed his hat and looked past them into the distance.

Benson and Melissa also looked away and cast their gaze to the smoky pillars in the garden in the middle of the street as they looked forward to seeing the underground transportation system in Backlund.

Carrying his suitcase with an expressionless look, Klein walked past them with his body kept straight. He entered the departure station, facing the mass of people pouring into the Land of Hope, people filled with wonderful hopes in their hearts.

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.

(End of the Second Volume—Faceless)

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CHAPTER 483
NEW IDENTITY

The sky was dark outside the window, but it wasn't the dark fog which Klein was used to. The sea waves rolled in, blowing away all the smog and making the clouds line up in various shapes, reflecting the reddish-gold sunlight.

This was Pritz Harbor, the largest and busiest port in the Loen Kingdom.

Wearing a light vest and white shirt, Klein stood by the window and watched the outside world for a while until his pocket watch urged him to return to the mahogany table.

In the warmth of the fireplace, he picked up a black, round fountain pen, unfolded a letter, and slowly wrote:

Dear Mr. Azik,

Forgive me for not writing to you until today, but for the past few days, I've been wandering in Backlund, immersed in the devastation that has been inflicted on this great city by the events of the past few days. If we were ordinary people, perhaps we would've been covered with white cloth and carried to the crematorium, eventually settling in a tiny niche…

I've waited for quite a while and finally found an opportunity to retrieve what belongs to me. This includes the Card of Blasphemy I promised you. In addition, there's another item which I will get the messenger to bring to you as well; it's a copper whistle that can summon a messenger. It comes from a chance encounter of mine, regarding an elder who crawled out of his coffin.

I'm sure you're puzzled having read this, as the description I used similarly points to you. This is what puzzles me.

…This is exactly what happened. I suspect that the original owner of the copper whistle is a member of the Numinous Episcopate that tries to revive Death. Furthermore, his level isn't low. Perhaps you'll be able to tell something from this copper whistle…

Before leaving Backlund, I will write to the Machinery Hivemind to describe the massive underground ruin where you fought Ince Zangwill. I hope that they will be able to figure out the truth with the help of this information.

After going through a roundabout and indirect test, I've confirmed that they do not have any enmity towards you and me for the time being. If you're in trouble, perhaps you can try seeking their help.

Finally, I have one more question. Is there any way to remove the residual mental corruption of a Beyonder characteristic that has already solidified?

…I am about to set sail. I wish you a smooth journey in finding your memories and a safe journey for myself as well.

*Your student and friend, *

Klein Moretti.

Putting down the pen and reading it once more, Klein folded the letter and stuffed it into the envelope along with the Dark Emperor card and the copper whistle left behind by the suspected Numinous Episcopate member.

When he was done, he picked up the copper whistle Mr. Azik had given him and summoned the messenger by blowing into it.

The messenger was still nearly four meters tall, made purely of white bones, its eye sockets burning with black fire. However, Klein's spiritual

intuition told him that this was another messenger.

Sighing secretly, Klein raised his arm and placed the letter into the messenger's lowered palm.

The messenger lowered his head to take a look, before quickly disintegrating into bones and drilled into the ground like a torrential downpour.

Seeing this, Klein lightly tapped his right molar and deactivated his Spirit Vision.

He returned his gaze to the table, where there was a pale yellow identification card. This was a necessary item required for official purchases of any voyage tickets.

For this, he had specially gone to Sharron and obtained a new identity through her circle.

This identity was that of a bounty hunter, a lunatic who was eager to go on an adventure at sea to get rich. In accordance with Klein's wishes, his name was Gehrman Sparrow.

"A hunter of evil…" Klein whispered, putting away a series of documents for his new identity.

Shortly after, he drew the curtains, took four steps counterclockwise, and went above the fog.

There was still some time before the Tarot Gathering, so Klein quickly retrieved Creeping Hunger and wore it on his hand.

Closing his eyes, he tried to sense each and every twisted, illusory soul. He attempted to release the Faceless.

In the real world, Creeping Hunger would happily consume this gift and spit out the corresponding Beyonder characteristic, but above the fog, it didn't dare to act rashly. It allowed the soul of the Faceless to leave the glove and appear to the side of the long bronze table.

It was a middle-aged man with a blurry face. His twisted and painful feelings seemed to dissipate quite a bit.

With difficulty, he bowed at Klein, who was leaning back in his chair. His figure gradually turned dim, almost plummeting beneath the gray fog at any moment.

In the majestic palace, Klein could directly "communicate" without any additional rituals prepared; thus, he extended his spirituality and stabilized the man before saying in a low voice, "Do you know where there are live mermaids?"

The man answered in an adrift manner, "Apart from those kept by the Church of the Evernight Goddess, they can only be found by sailing from the Gargas Archipelago towards the Sonia Sea for at least a week. That was my destination."

So he's also a Faceless seeking to advance… In order to seek out mermaids, he had taken the risk to go out to sea. However, he somehow died at the hands of Rear Admiral Hurricane Qilangos in the end… The Church of the Goddess rears quite a number of mermaids? Klein suddenly asked in realization, "Which organization did you belong to? Or should I say, where did your potion formula come from?"

The blurry-faced middle-aged man's body suddenly trembled. It was only two seconds later that he spoke up.

"The Secret Order. I belong to the Secret Order."

Secret Order? Doesn't the Secret Order rear their own mermaids? Klein hesitated for a moment before asking, "Have you ever seen your leader,

Zaratul?"

The illusory and transparent Faceless was silent at first, but then he shouted with a sharp voice, "I have!

"H-he's abnormal! He's an undying monster!"

As he spoke, his figure became increasingly thin, almost on the verge of dissipating.

As expected, Zaratul is still alive! Just what had happened for a Secret Order member to be so afraid of him? More accurately, I should use "Him"…Klein quickly asked about another key issue, "Apart from the treasures left behind by the Antigonus family and what your Secret Order has, is there anywhere I can get the High-Sequence Beyonder formulas for the Seer pathway?"

The Faceless turned increasingly transparent and more illusory. He finally left the words: "The Church of the Evernight Goddess… Cathedral of Serenity…"

The Holy Cathedral… Klein silently watched as the Faceless's Spirit Body achieved complete liberation as he repeated the words. The Cathedral of Serenity was the headquarters of the Church of the Evernight Goddess, also known as the Holy Cathedral according to the Nighthawks.

There really are high Sequence potion formulas of the Seer pathway hidden there… I wonder how many secrets the various Churches have kept buried and hidden… Sighing, Klein let the dark green glue-like substance, that had formed on the surface of his glove, slide onto the surface of the long bronze table.

The Faceless Beyonder characteristic eventually formed a jelly-like translucent object. In the dark green background, from time to time, there were different faces emerging, like shadows hidden behind dark curtains.

Klein took a few looks before nodding indiscernibly. He muttered to himself, "I'll use The World later to get Mr. Hanged Man to sell this Beyonder characteristic either to Artisans or Beyonders who need it."

Although he had found a flaw in the official Beyonders' surveillance of 15 Minsk Street by means of divination above the gray fog, he didn't return there so as to not provoke them or expose the secrets of his Spirit Body. Instead, he spent extra money to buy a change of clothing and other daily necessities. All of that amounted to twelve pounds.

Together with the eight pounds paid for the documents of his new identity, his wallet was so empty that there was almost no need for it to exist.

As for the 10 percent stake in the bike company, Klein found an opportunity to meet with Isengard Stanton and signed a legal agreement to entrust the matter to him. After all, their relationship wasn't a secret in the eyes of the Nighthawks or the Machinery Hivemind.

I still have five pounds in cash and five gold coins… It will cost four pounds to head for the Rorsted Archipelago, and that's for a third-class ticket at the lower deck… It would take at least four pounds to go from the Rorsted Archipelago to the Gargas Archipelago… I have to quickly sell off the Faceless Beyonder characteristic… This way, I would be able to afford a second-class cabin and eat decent food… Thanks to Emlyn's suitcase being placed above the gray fog all this time, I've had to buy another one… Klein silently went through his financial situation, feeling as if he had returned to the time when he had just transmigrated, relying on the salary of the Nighthawks before he could even buy a suit.

*A Sequence 6 Beyonder characteristic varies between 3,000 to 4,000 pounds. If I encounter someone in desperate need for it, then it can be sold at a premium… But apart from maintaining my living expenses, I have to consider the cost of the Nimblewright Master's supplementary ingredients. I also have to consider the cost of the ritual needed to eliminate the mental corruption. *Klein sighed and took out his pocket watch to take a look at it.

Seeing that it was about time, he sent a message to Little Sun to prepare for the gathering.

…

Fors's vision turned clear as she saw three figures sitting across the long, mottled table.

A new member? With a thought, she quickly settled down.

At this moment, she didn't care if the Tarot Club had any new members. Her mind was filled with the incident of the smog and plague from last week.

She vividly remembered that The World had warned herself and Miss Justice at the last gathering that something huge was brewing in Backlund, which could likely bring about a tragedy. Mr. Fool had confirmed that conjecture, and he had further pointed out that the person at the heart of the problem was Prince Edessak.

She didn't doubt Mr. Fool's abilities and felt that the tragedy needed time to brew, giving her plenty of time to investigate. Who knew that it would come so quickly and so suddenly!

Prince Edessak was also reported to have been infected in the haze and unfortunately died… It really happened. It really happened… Thinking back to the contents of the newspapers from a few days ago, she seemed to understand something, but she wasn't sure of it. For a moment, she felt terrified and uneasy.

As a Sequence 9, I seemed to have become involved with terrifying matters that involved a huge city, a prince, and tens of thousands of lives just because I'm a member of the Tarot Club! It was only at this moment that The Magician, Fors, realized the importance of being a member of the Tarot Club.

Then, she heard Miss Justice's usual greeting that lacked her exuberance.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Fool.

"You saved Backlund again!"

Ah? What? When was I saved again? The Moon Emlyn listened blankly.

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CHAPTER 484
ASYMMETRICAL

As he thought back to the recent events, The Moon, Emlyn, was quick to associate it with the great smog and the plague outbreak, guessing that this was what the lady opposite him was referring to.

But I heard that it was the work of a Demoness of Despair who was trying to advance herself… Furthermore, the Church of the Lord of Storms responded quickly, creating a hurricane to blow everything away. How could it be said that The Fool saved Backlund? Emlyn, who had an entire clan behind him, was quite well-informed. Upon doing the comparison, it was hard for him not to be surprised and confused.

Although he had always been proud and didn't wish to spend time on social interactions, he still felt an instinctive fear when faced with a hidden existence that he had to address with "He." He didn't dare to open his mouth to ask and decided to listen for a while.

Alger, even though he was drifting out at sea, had received news of the great smog in Backlund. He was interested in the secrets and the truth behind it, confident in the belief that this was definitely a struggle between deities. After all, it had attracted the attention of Mr. Fool!

I'll ask Miss Justice when we exchange information. However, she might not be too sure of the details. It's rather impossible for her to know too many details based on her standing. Heh heh, she has great curiosity. To open up with such a greeting, she would definitely attempt to get an answer from Mr. Fool, hoping to get an answer. I hope that I have the opportunity to listen in from the side… With this in mind, Alger turned his head to look at The Sun. Seeing how he wasn't anxious but calm and reserved, he knew that the City

of Silver's exploratory team had already broken out from the fate of repeating their lives.

Similarly, Audrey, who had figured out that the operation was successful from reading Little Sun's reaction, heaved a secret sigh of relief. She prepared herself to understand what had happened later in detail.

After a solemn bow towards Mr. Fool, she thanked the seemingly unkind Tarot Club member, The World, for his advance warning.

“…Mr. World, if it wasn't for your advance warning, then perhaps tens of thousands of people would've died in Backlund during this great smog."

"In truth, I was also doing it to save myself." Klein controlled The World to give a hoarse laugh.

He said it with sincerity and without any trace of acting, because if it wasn't for Miss Justice who was notified in advance and warned the Church of the Evernight Goddess, then the powerful existence who erased Mr. A wouldn't have arrived in time, and he himself might not have been able to hold on for long.

*If Mr. A had disintegrated me and ate me, then perhaps I might not have a chance of reviving… *Klein thought in appreciation.

Mr. A's feasting would literally be feasting!

Immediately after, as The Fool, he leaned back in his chair and responded with a smile, "All I did was provide some trivial help."

"No, your adorer really helped save Backlund. His contribution is the greatest amongst everyone," Audrey praised from the bottom of her heart. "His warning allowed the Goddess, the Church of the Evernight Goddess to make preparations, wiping out the Demoness of Despair in a timely manner and preventing the Primordial Demoness from awakening. It allowed the contamination of the great smog to be kept under control. Furthermore, he

even destroyed the Aurora Order's ritual, preventing the attempted descent of the True Creator's once again, keeping him at bay from the real world."

Audrey received unanimous praise by Earl Hall and his wife for providing the most important information. They hadn't concealed the results of the investigation and some of the details they had gathered from her.

Of course, they also raised their wish as parents that their daughter wasn't to get too involved with that secret organization. It would be enough if she stayed in the outer circle and gathered some information, then maintained her strength below that of Sequence 7.

The Primordial Demoness's awakening… The True Creator's attempted descent. What exactly happened in Backlund? At the same time, Alger and Emlyn had the same reaction, but their expressions were different. The former only slightly raised his eyelids as his pupils contracted, unconsciously sitting to the side a bit, while the latter gave the illusion that he was about to jump up.

*Mother, no, Esteemed Moon, when did Backlund become so dangerous? Two evil gods had actually made "Their" appearance during the great smog! Is that young lady lying? Even though Mr. Fool is an existence suspected of being a deity, it's also impossible that "He" would simultaneously offend two entities of the same level, right… Could it be that "He" is actually the incarnation of a true god? Or is there an alliance of deities behind "Him?" Is that why the Ancestor asked me to pray to "Him?" *The more Emlyn thought about it, the faster his heart beat, but it was impossible for him to receive verification.

The fact that Sanguine had the nickname "vampire" didn't mean that they didn't have a heartbeat. It was just that they were relatively slow, and the heart itself was one of the Sanguine's fatal weaknesses.

Indeed! Indeed it's an event that had attracted the attention of Mr. Fool… But, what benefits could "He" gain from sabotaging the evil gods' plans? Alger sighed inwardly.

Fors was surprised and frightened. She didn't expect that the horrible great smog that had taken the lives of tens of thousands of people would conceal an even more horrifying truth.

If it hadn't been stopped in time, the whole of Backlund would've been destroyed, and Xio and I wouldn't have survived… Fors swallowed a mouthful of saliva hard.

Her feelings were similar to Audrey's feelings as well. Through this matter, this young noble lady clearly understood one thing, which was that the life she believed to be peaceful and calm was like a soap bubble amidst a clash between deities. Just a slight perturbation could immediately pop it into nothingness.

Or it could be said that the entire kingdom, the entire human society, exists only because of the balance between the deities, and this balance is extremely fragile… Every time a similar thought gushed to her mind, Audrey felt a wave of grief wash over her.

Klein was pleased when he saw that someone knew and remembered his contribution. He smiled and said, "Unfortunately, he has to stay away from Backlund as a result."

Mr. Fool's adorer has to temporarily leave Backlund? Audrey stood up again and sincerely bowed.

"Please convey my gratitude to him."

Klein maintained his image without giving a reply other than nodding his head.

At this moment, Audrey added, "I'm very sorry, as the three Churches and the military are cleaning up Backlund, I was unable to get the follow-up pages to Roselle's diary. Please wait one more week."

"Sure," Klein said in a flat tone.

Hearing their conversation, Fors was startled as she hurriedly looked to the end of the long bronze table and said, "Dear Mr. Fool, I received three pages of Roselle's diary."

Not bad. More members mean more channels, and many things snowball quickly… Klein gently nodded.

"Very good."

*Roselle's diary? *Emlyn felt as if he had heard something extraordinary again.

Under his puzzled gaze, Fors conjured three pages of the diary and passed them on to Mr. Fool.

Only then did Klein remember that he had missed introducing a particular vampire. Smiling, he introduced, "This is a new member, Mr. Moon.

"This gathering is called the Tarot Club. They are…”

Mr. Moon, I thought it would be a lady who would choose the Moon… Audrey greeted politely while her thoughts scattered.

Similarly, Emlyn wondered whether the members such as The Hanged Man and Justice were humans or transcendent creatures, which pathways they were from, at which Sequences, from which organizations, or if they were friendly to the Sanguine.

Klein didn't care about them sizing each other up as he cast his gaze to the diary entries in his hands.

"11th February. Today, I found out about a secret of the Sauron family. Hahaha! I'm going to die from laughter! Hahaha!

"So it turns out that the Hunter pathway that they possess will change gender at Sequence 4. Men wouldn't change, but women will change into

men! It's no wonder that none of the High-Sequence Beyonders of the Sauron family that I'm aware of are female. The Iron-blooded Knight is indeed a true man!

"Hahaha, if it wasn't for how sensitive this secret was, then I would even feel like ridiculing Floren next time. The Sauron family ancestor that he looks like might've been a woman!

"This potion is way too much of a trap, isn't it? I hope the Savant pathway wouldn't have any strange changes upon reaching the high Sequences. I don't want to one day suddenly realize that I either don't advance, or I have to change into a woman."

The first thought that flashed through Klein's mind at the sight of this diary entry was: *Emperor, you won't become a woman, but you will do it with a Demoness, perhaps more than one…*

Indeed, there's a pathway that changes women to men. Furthermore, it's within the ones I expected… Hunter represents war, causing women to change genders at Sequence 4… This is a little odd. The Demoness pathway changes at Sequence 7 Witch. It doesn't actually strictly correspond… Klein felt the warped and feeling of madness even more acutely. It was a result of the extreme asymmetry.

*Could it be that the underlying logic of this world is chaos, distortion, madness, and asymmetry? *He tried his hardest not to frown.

"12th February. This won't do. I want to laugh whenever I see Floren.

"Hahahaha!

"15th February, the modified artillery I designed and supervised was completed. The effect was worse than I expected, but the problem isn't that great. With it and mass production, I'll be able to show the world what true advanced tactics are!

"In order to celebrate, I decided to hold a banquet to invite those fellows who looked down on me. Just wait to be slapped in the face!"

The Emperor truly doesn't let a grudge go… While sighing, Klein turned to the second page of the diary.

"5th May, that unspeakable organization called for another gathering.

"I'm struck by the way they gather their members every time. It's phenomenal, no—a miracle.

"With my earlier observations, I raised some problems at this gathering. For example, all the Sequence 0 names have a high-enough level on the Blasphemy Slate. Only Red Priest appears rather unique. It doesn't sound strong enough. The old gentleman sitting beside me told me that 'red' represents the red of war. And priest can be understood as the ritualist of strength at its core.

"Someone objected, believing that the 'priest' in Red Priest represents being a priest of that Creator.

"I leaned towards the former and asked for the name of the old gentleman in a low voice. I didn't know the identity of every member. To put it in an extreme manner, I only know a portion of them.

"The old gentleman answered me with a smile. He said his name was Hermes.

"Hermes? The Hermes who created the language of ancient Hermes? Hermes, the founder of humanity's mysticism?"

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CHAPTER 485
RICH INFORMATION

Hermes? That's an ancient powerhouse… Klein frowned slightly.

With his solid knowledge of mysticism, he was well aware of the era in which the old gentleman who had created the language of ancient Hermes had been active.

That is during the Second Epoch when the giants ruled the land and the dragons soared through the skies. In a particular sense, he appeared before the God of Combat and the Earth Mother in human history. In other words, even Little Sun, who didn't know the seven gods before joining the Tarot Club, would likely know of the name Hermes. Yes, I should find a chance to confirm this using The World…

That old gentleman had personally experienced the period when early humans tested the potions themselves, slowly seeking the thorny path of the powers of a Beyonder, one step at a time. He had used Jotun and Dragonese as blueprints, and standing on the shoulders of the pioneers, he created a Beyonder language that belongs to humans. He probably saw the first Blasphemy Slate!

*He actually survived until the time of Emperor Roselle, and he might even be alive until now! This is a living fossil of human mysticism! *Klein felt a surge of emotions. On the other hand, he felt the terror of the Twilight Hermit Order.

It even had Hermes as one of its members!

As for the other secret organizations, or even internally to the seven Churches, they will often use ancient Hermes to perform sacrificial rites and rituals!

The Twilight Hermit Order is really high-end, grand, and of a high level… Klein couldn't help but sigh inwardly.

What he envied most wasn't the existence of Hermes, a legend who lived throughout human history, among the Twilight Hermit Order, but the fact that they possessed the second Blasphemy Slate.

This is simply cheating! Klein sighed at the thought of how the Tarot Club only had one out of the twenty-one Cards of Blasphemy.

He turned his focus back to the paper and continued to read the remaining entries of the diary.

"Heavens! The old man sitting next to me who looks so ordinary and nothing special was actually Hermes. He lived from the dark Second Epoch all the way to the Beyonder decline of the Fifth Epoch!

"I made the right choice joining this organization!

"I can see my bright future, not using three exclamation marks to describe my feelings right now just isn't enough!!!

"This bunch of big shots, these undying old bastards, are all gathered together because they believe in the opinion that twilight is approaching? No, it's definitely not the case. At least, I'm not!

"There must be people among them who passionately believe in those ideals, purely waiting for the original Creator to awaken, hoping for the progress of history to develop to that node as predicted. Heh heh, according to my understanding, it's most likely not an awakening, but a resurrection.

"But there can't be more than half of those people. The rest are people having their own goals; either they're ambitious like me, or they're just lurking snitches. Wait a minute, I thought of a problem; I quickly joined the gathering after I agreed to the secret invitation, but I didn't undergo any scrutiny, and although the person who called for the gathering said that the members of this gathering had their differences and had to vote for me to join, barely allowing me to join after a majority vote of two-thirds, but that's not the point. The point is that they don't care if I believe in the idea that twilight is coming, nor do they mind me having all sorts of thoughts.

"What are they relying on to determine that I won't bring harm to this organization? Could there be a High-Sequence Beyonder of the Spectator pathway among them, one that reaches the level of an angel? 'He' had created a secret psychological cue in me through my verbal promise without me realizing it. And that they're confident enough to discover the hidden malice of its members?

"That might be possible, but thinking about it makes me shudder.

"In addition, without permission, once the name of that organization is mentioned to the outside world, it will be immediately noticed. They even gave me a few examples of former members who were eliminated… Writing on paper or in a newly created language wouldn't do as well!

"Let me think. Let me think. Sequence 2 of the Spectator pathway is Discerner while Sequence 1 is Author. Who among them fulfills the corresponding traits 1?

"Yes, I have a preliminary suspect, the person who convenes the gathering.

"Yes, there's also Sequence 0 of the Spectator pathway. Its name is Visionary!

"But I don't believe anyone here has reached the level of a true god. Otherwise, there's no need to hide behind the scenes. Of course, they might have divine items at the Sequence 0 level or the Uniqueness of a particular

pathway. Perhaps it's what creates this realistic dreamscape that can connect the east and west shores of the continent while having the ability to react the moment its name is mentioned.

"I didn't think too much into it back then. Amidst my shock, I asked about a few other matters, such as why the term 'authority' is used in the description of deities. Old Mister Hermes gave an interesting answer."

When he saw this, Klein realized that the diary page had already reached its end.

He quickly turned to the next page, but he quickly turned back because the following page didn't connect to the previous page at all.

*Where's the answer? Is it on the next page of the original diary, or was he too lazy to write it because it's too long? Or he felt that there's no need to jot it down in the diary? *Klein was so frantic that he wanted to transmigrate and grab Roselle by the neck to get him to tell him what Hermes had said!

Of course, he didn't show any signs of emotion on the surface, nor did he make any additional body language.

So the Spectator pathway's Sequence 0 is called Visionary. This corresponds well with the Dragon of Imagination. I thought it would be Dragon… Visionary adheres more to what humans know, which also means that consuming the corresponding Sequence 0 potion wouldn't necessarily change one into a dragon…

Sequence 1 Author. Just from the name of the potion, I find it quite similar to that quill, 0-08's traits…

The Twilight Hermit Order's method of summoning members is a realistic dreamscape that connects the eastern and western ends of the continent? The "miracle" description at the beginning of the diary gave me a fright. I thought they had the gray fog or the mysterious space above the gray fog as

well… Klein calmed his emotions and discovered that the single diary page provided a lot of important information.

First of all, he knew that the ancient sage, Hermes, had at least lived to Roselle's era which was about a hundred or two hundred years ago, and he was a member of that mysterious organization.

Second, from Roselle's description of how the organization's name couldn't be spoken, he basically confirmed that the mysterious organization was equal to the Twilight Hermit Order.

Finally, he learned the Sequence 0, Sequence 1, and Sequence 2 names of the Spectator pathway. Although they wouldn't be needed anytime soon, they enriched his accumulated knowledge of mysticism.

Perhaps Miss Justice would ask the relevant question at any time… Her curiosity had always been strong… Forcing himself to forget the missing answers, Klein turned to the last page.

As he read, Audrey habitually observed the details, and she acutely noticed that the Dark Emperor card, which Mr. Fool had placed face down on the long mottled table, was missing!

He gave it to an adorer to provide the appropriate help, or he exchanged items with some existence? Audrey blinked, trying to guess the reason.

She was more inclined to the first theory, because without the help of Mr. Fool, "His" adorers wouldn't necessarily be able to destroy the ritual for the descent of the True Creator.

It's a pity that Father is unable to see the detailed file; otherwise, I would know who Mr. Fool's adorer is, hmm… He's a man of medium height, dressed in Loen's most popular double-breasted frock coat, and he had been near Red Rose Manor at the time. I should be able to lock onto a target by using this information as a basis for investigation… But that might anger Mr. Fool. "He" hasn't permitted me to expose the identity of his adorer…

Audrey, don't think too much. Don't be curious. Perhaps you'll meet in the future… Audrey retracted her gaze.

At this moment, Klein felt like laughing because of the contents of the last page.

"16th March, my first time attending a noble ball in this world.

"The young ladies and madams are a lot better than I imagined. In the novels I read, they didn't bathe in the middle ages and relied on perfume to mask their disgusting body odor. They would frequently step on feces when they were out, and easily smeared their faces with things that are laced with poisonous heavy metals.

"But it's different here. They love to take baths. They have charming perfumes, fair skin, and tight waists. Most of them have pretty good figures.

"I overcame my nervousness and had a nice chat with the young daughter of Viscount Derilose. We talked about the meritorious deeds of my ancestors, talked about my family's estate, and my present aristocratic title. Then, she politely mentioned that she wanted to get something to eat.

"I didn't pay much attention to it at the time since hitting on chicks needed to be taken slow, but when I went downstairs to take a walk in the garden, I found her in an empty study f**king with the eldest son of Earl Florais. F**k! This is their first time meeting each! Is it me, Huang Tao, Roselle, who isn't good-looking enough? Or am I not entertaining enough?

"How realistic! Fortunately, the madams have treated me quite well. I can sense the hidden passion within them, hehe. "

Roselle really wasn't used to the Intis style at first. According to historical records, the Gustav family had been on the decline for several generations, with only their aristocratic title of baron and a little property estate to their names. This lasted until Roselle made his fortune… I didn't expect the Emperor to have a woman snatched away. Wait, I remember Roselle

mentioning in his diary that he had done it with Countess Florais… Impressive. Impressive… Klein looked down at the two remaining diary entries.

They were of no value and were accounts of Roselle's life in the manor. The entire content was him wanting to hunt, his missing of delicacies, as well as his hopes of obtaining Beyonder powers and beautiful maidservants.

Klein leaned back a little, allowed the diary pages to disappear from his hands, and said with a smile, "You may begin."

Audrey immediately looked at The Sun diagonally across from her.

"Have you extricated yourself from the cycle?"

Derrick nodded honestly first before bowing towards the end of the bronze table.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, thank you for your guidance. It allowed me to find the key point of the Angel of Fate on the mural with the words 'Rose Redemption.' It aided the Chief in destroying the repeated cycle of fate."

What Angel of Fate… I don't know anything… The very puzzled Fool, Klein, replied with a smile, "Not bad."

Footnotes:

Ch 485 Footnote 1

Author's Note: Don't be eager to say Dragon of Nightmare or Dragon of Imagination. It contains an important setting.

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CHAPTER 486
KLEIN'S CONJECTURES

Emlyn was similarly confused. Words like "Rose Redemption,""Angel of Fate," and "destroying the repeated cycle of fate" were beyond his understanding. He only felt that he could understand every word, but had no idea what they meant when placed together.

*Could it be that the young Sun had just escaped the pursuit of an angel? *Emlyn guessed from the small amount of information he could understand.

After Derrick thanked Mr. Fool, The Hanged Man shifted his position slightly, leaned slightly towards him, and kicked off from Miss Justice's question. He said in a normal tone, "What was the exact sequence of events?"

Derrick didn't hide anything and honestly replied, "Miss Justice, Mr. Hanged Man, Miss Magician, and Mr. World, thank you for your concern, and thank you for the suggestions you previously gave me. In my sixth exploration, I tried…”

He described his actions and the corresponding results, highlighting the matter that the little boy, Jack, came from Enmat Harbor and the details of the Rose Redemption murals.

Enmat Harbor… That strange little boy, Jack, is really from the Loen Kingdom. In other words, the Forsaken Land of the Gods, where the City of Silver is, is somehow connected to the Northern and Southern continents in some way. As long as one finds the right place, they'll be able to enter… Klein seemed to be listening leisurely, but he had made a judgment in his mind.

Enmat Harbor was located to the east of Tingen City and was one of the most famous seaports in the central region of the Loen Kingdom. Together with Pritz Harbor to the south, they supported the resupply of more than half of Backlund's goods.

The Spirit Medium, Ma'am Daly, had once "settled" there, and Mr. Z of the Aurora Order seems to be there as well… Klein recalled something from the past.

The same judgment also appeared in the minds of Alger, Audrey, and Fors. Towards this, some of them had pure excitement, others filled with curiosity and worry, fearing that the all-consuming darkness around the City of Silver would continue to spread, eventually enveloping both the Northern and Southern Continent and the five seas.

"The Chief told me that he recalled some unverified content recorded in some ancient books, based on matters that had happened and my warning. Rumor has it that when the Lord that created everything, the omnipotent and omniscient God had 'His' attention on this piece of land, he had several angels surrounding him. And there were eight leaders of the angels, powerful beings that were closest to god's throne. Among them included the son of God." Derrick recalled Demon Hunter Colin's words and slowly said, "He suspected that Amon is the Angel of Time among the Kings of Angels, and the mural depicted the Angel of Fate, Tail Devourer Ouroboros.

*Eight Kings of Angels? The eight Kings of Angels who are closest to the Creator's throne? *Audrey was inexplicably excited when she heard this.

She couldn't help but curiously ask, "Mr. Sun, what are the titles of the other six Kings of Angels and their names?"

"The Chief didn't say, nor did I dare to ask…" Derrick replied, ashamed.

I really want to know the answer… Audrey subconsciously looked towards the end of the long bronze table, looking longingly at Mr. Fool who was shrouded in gray fog, hoping to get the appropriate answer.

She had already decided on the price she was willing to pay.

Why are you looking at me… I don't know either… Klein controlled the twitching of the corners of his mouth.

Of course, he wasn't completely clueless. He could barely guess who two of the Kings of Angels were.

The evil spirit in the underground ruin had described the Medici family as one of the founders of Rose Redemption. According to that mural, the Angel of Fate, Ouroboros, is likely one of the leaders of Rose Redemption. Both basically have equivalent standing, which is to say that the Medici family possesses a King of Angels, but it cannot be determined if "He" has already perished…

The Medici family is suspected to be in control of the Hunter pathway, which is the Red Priest pathway. That King of Angels' title should be Red Angel or Angel of War…

Since the son of God is a King of Angels, Amon is one of them, being Angel of Time. Then Adam might not be one, but I can't confirm "His" title… As for the other four Kings of Angels, I can't guess who they are… Perhaps, there might be one or a few of them inside the Twilight Hermit Order…

It's possible! The Twilight Hermit Order views the Fallen Creator as its enemy, making it at odds against Rose Redemption which worships that evil god. Perhaps, its true origin comes from those few Kings of Angels…

Right, there's indirect evidence which isn't substantial enough. According to the legends of the City of Silver, the authority of the Dragon of Imagination, Ankewelt, was taken back by the Creator. Logically speaking, it's not impossible for the Lord that created everything to give a portion of the authority to a King of Angels by "His" throne. And from the description and guesses from Roselle's diary, the Twilight Hermit Order likely has a Spectator, which has the strength at the level of an angel in the Visionary pathway or even higher. The two can form a correspondence… Hermes is a

person who had experienced that piece of history… As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Klein smiled and said, "You will come into contact with it in the future."

When I figure it out, I'll sell you the appropriate information… he added inwardly.

Seeing that Mr. Fool had no intention of answering, Audrey looked away with a slight sense of loss, motioning Little Sun to continue his story.

Alger had a bold idea.

The history before the Cataclysm can no longer be referenced. At the end of the Third Epoch and the beginning of the Fourth Epoch, there were only the six orthodox gods. Together with Amon and the Tail Devourer, aren't there eight? 'They' had benefited from the death of the Creator and succeeded in advancing to Sequence 0?

For a moment, Alger felt that his thoughts were blasphemous actions that could be punished by fire, but he was also unable to contain his excitement. He finally calmed down and concentrated on listening to Little Sun tell his story.

Towards all of this, Emlyn could only respond with a blank look.

For all this, Emlyn, could only respond with a blank expression. Although the Sanguine had a long history and life span, so they knew quite a bit about the history before the Cataclysm, they were all concentrated before the Ancestor fell asleep, and it didn't involve the so-called "Kings of Angels."

While Derrick was recounting the details of how the City of Silver, Chief Colin, destroyed the repeated cycles of fate, Klein was thinking of another matter.

It can be roughly confirmed that the Tail Devourer, Ouroboros, is the Sequence 1 Snake of Mercury of the Monster pathway. All the Kings of

Angels correspond to Sequence 1's?

Could that Angel of Fate be the one pursuing Will Auceptin? If he is, that means that the True Creator's forces in Backlund aren't limited to Mr. A and his subordinates. However, the two Snakes of Mercury are fighting for the position of Sequence 0, to the point of draining all of the Tail Devourer's strength. He should be fully occupied and cannot spare time for this…

Of course, I can't eliminate the possibility that Will Auceptin is equivalent to Ouroboros. However, the chances aren't high. Rose Redemption has quite a number of demigods and even angels. There's no need to let the Tail Devourer restart his life as an ordinary person without protection.

There's another possibility. The two Snakes of Mercury in Backlund aren't the Angel of Fate. The latter is still active in the Forsaken Land of the Gods. That way, all three Snakes of Mercury are accounted for.

After finishing his recount of how they escaped the cycle, Derrick expressed his gratitude once again. As for Audrey and company, despite listening to the repeated events a second time, it still left them shivering down to their bones, filling them with curiosity and fear.

*This is beyond my knowledge of Beyonder powers. It's all thanks to the help Mr. Fool gave! *Audrey sincerely praised the Tarot Club's master from the bottom of her heart, feeling full of confidence.

Alger and the others had similar thoughts as her. They all thought that the repeated cycles of life were close to a miracle that could only be destroyed by a deity. Fortunately, the master of the Tarot Club was a deity. Mr. Fool was a deity!

At that moment, Derrick looked opposite him and sincerely said, "Miss Magician, due to some unexpected circumstances on our return to the City of Silver, despite it having been resolved, we have slowed down. It will prevent us from returning to the City of Silver on time. Your Spirit Eater's

stomach pouch will require another day or two. Yes, I believe I'm no longer under surveillance."

"No problem, I can wait. I've prepared enough gold," Fors said as she let out a sigh.

She had sold the Mirror Dragon's eyes to Miss Justice and had received 1,000 pounds in cash.

After informing her teacher, Dorian, of the exact results, her honesty had been praised and approved. Dorian told her that the 800 pounds offer had been made in order to give her about 100 pounds in "labor fees." As such, the extra 200 pounds would be a bonus for her. In other words, she had earned 300 pounds. Together with her original savings, she now had a total of 650 pounds, which was enough to buy the stomach pouch of a Spirit Eater.

With this, Dorian trusted her a lot and revealed a lot of information regarding ingredients.

It will take me at least two weeks to digest the rest of the potion. I'm not in a hurry… Looking diagonally across the table, Fors said, "Mr. Hanged Man, there's news of the Dragon-Eyed Sea Condor you require. 2,200 pounds."

Dorian had given a reference price of 2,000 pounds. On the one hand, Fors had allowed room for bargaining, and on the other hand, wished to earn a little more.

2,200 pounds… Alger couldn't help but frown.

His financial situation wasn't looking good after he purchased the Wind-blessed potion formula. Although he still had some secret savings, they were either of use elsewhere, or he hadn't been able to find a buyer for a long time.

Phew. He secretly let out a sigh and calmly said, "Very well, but I'll need some time to collect the funds. In addition, yours is too expensive, I have many channels to get cheaper ones. 1,900 pounds. That's the highest price I can accept."

"No, 2,000 pounds. That's the bottom line!" Fors replied without hesitation.

She was afraid that if she made too high an offer, then the other party would give up the deal.

Alger immediately nodded.

"Deal!

This… Fors was somewhat stunned.

After listening by the side and witnessing the conclusion of a deal, Emlyn thought and eagerly asked, "Ladies and gentlemen, does anyone know how a Sanguine can improve their strength without relying on the bestowment of their elders?"

As soon as he finished speaking, he felt numerous gazes land on him.

Sanguine? Is that the vampires of legends? Audrey's eyes sparkled as she studied Mr. Moon.

And as a novelist, Fors no doubt had all sorts of beautiful or exotic fantasies of the Sanguine, and her eyes were just as bright.

Sanguine? Alger was taken aback at first, but he soon relaxed his brows.

A vampire hiding in the darkness, covered in pus, while moving like the wind? Derrick couldn't help but look sideways to size up Emlyn.

Sanguine? The World was late by a second before giving a normal, necessary response.

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CHAPTER 487
THE GROWING TAROT CLUB

The moment he was being stared at, Emlyn was momentarily at a loss, vaguely aware that he had asked something he shouldn't have.

Why are you looking at me like that. Can't I have a Sanguine friend? Should I try to explain… No, what's wrong with being a Sanguine? I'm a Sanguine; there's wrong with admitting that! Us Sanguine have a long history, long lives, and rich heritage. It's a lofty race! None of you are especially amazing either. What was just traded was only a Sequence 6 item at best! After a few thoughts, Emlyn White raised his chin and proudly added, "Yes, I am a pure Sanguine."

No one asked him if he was… Mr. Moon is lacking some self-confidence, which resulted in him reacting a little excessively… Audrey read Emlyn's performance.

He's really a Sanguine… Fors asked out of curiosity, "Mr. Moon, do you Sanguine mimic humans and give aristocratic titles like duke, viscount, earl, and baron to label different powerhouses of different standing?"

"No, it's you humans who mimicked us Sanguine!" Emlyn sat up straight. "Long before the Cataclysm, long before the Second Epoch, our Sanguine already had these aristocratic titles. Those who have yet to fully control their strength are underage Sanguine, and as for me, I'm considered an adult. Going one step further, one will gain the title of baron and the progression leads all the way to duke. Above duke would be positions such as queen and prince. Back then, you humans were still under the rule of the Giant King's Court, so it's impossible for you to invent aristocratic titles!"

The moment his voice fell, the nearby Derrick blurted out, "There are no such records in the history of our City of Silver.

"The categorization of the Sanguine was determined by the appearance of the Blasphemy Slate. Prior to that, it was very vague and ambiguous. There were only titles such as the different family clans' head or leaders of a territory. Standing atop all is the Ancestor, Lilith. After that, it strictly followed the potion system, named after the different Sequence names."

Emlyn replied scornfully, "The history of our Sanguine was written with our long lives. It's not something that can be overturned by the random records of some small, ordinary City of Silver."

*Wait, they keep mentioning the City of Silver. Where exactly is it? Why haven't I heard of it… *After the retort, Emlyn realized that he had apparently overlooked something important.

"Our City of Silver doesn't make up history. Our records come from ancient books that can be verified or from the ruins of other cities," Derrick emphasized, somewhat aggrieved.

*If no one stops them, then I think they can argue about this matter until the end of the gathering… Although Little Sun is honest, sincere and reserved, he has a very stubborn and persistent personality. On the other hand, Mr. Moon seems to care especially about the history of the Sanguine… *Audrey did her daily observations as a Telepathist with piqued interest.

At this moment, Alger interrupted the discussion between The Sun and The Moon.

"I know how to raise the strength of a Sanguine."

Emlyn's attention was diverted.

"Uh, Mr. Hanged Man, what payment do you need? I can use some of the lost history our Sanguine has in exchange."

Alger revealed a smile.

"No, we're all members of the Tarot Club. This kind of information exchange is free of charge."

Mr. Hanged Man sure is a generous, noble man… Emlyn inwardly made a preliminary assessment.

"Thank you for your goodwill."

After thinking for two seconds, Alger said, "The Sanguine can also consume potions to advance, but it has be in correspondence—the correct type. The various Churches have done a certain amount of experimentation, and the results have proven that this method is feasible. However, I am unable to find out the exact details."

"But the main ingredient for those potions are from my kinsmen!" Emlyn denied such a method.

The Hanged Man laughed and said, "Never deal with absolutes. For example, I have a clue about the characteristics left behind by a Sanguine baron. He died in a sudden conflict and didn't have time to find his successor. As for you, you can use the potion method to receive this inheritance and prevent the power of the Sanguine from being lost."

This item was owned by a great pirate that Alger knew. As he didn't know what Sequence the potion corresponded to, he hadn't been able to sell it. Even his newly established Artisan source wasn't that interested either.

Use potions to inherit an inheritance to prevent the Sanguine's powers from being lost… Emlyn suddenly felt that Mr. Hanged Man was very reasonable. Hence, he asked, "What's the price?"

Alger chuckled and said, "Between 4,000 and 5,000 pounds. I won't know for sure until I find the owner of it."

He had never communicated with the great pirate before, but he believed that as long as the price wasn't outrageous, the pirate would accept it. To a pirate, selling something would mean profit as it didn't take much capital.

"5,000 pounds?" Emlyn exclaimed.

With such a large sum of money, I can buy a few puppets that I've been eyeing for a long time, and I can even get some new clothes for all my dolls! Emlyn's first reaction was to give up such a transaction. However, he thought of the Ancestor's favor in him, the glory of the Sanguine, and the identity of him being the race's savior. He was momentarily put in a difficult position.

Alger didn't rush him as he said indifferently with a smile, "I know this is a difficult decision. You can take your time and think about it."

"Alright." Emlyn breathed a sigh of relief.

Mr. Hanged Man is really… Audrey muttered to herself inwardly, turned to The Moon, and said to all the members, "Lady and gentlemen, do you have any news regarding the fruit of the Tree of Elders and the blood of a Mirror Dragon?"

"Yes," Emlyn answered without hesitation.

He had previously made a fortune due to a particular detective's purchase of Beyonder ingredients; therefore, at every Sanguine gathering, he would pay attention to such information.

Without waiting for Miss Justice's exuberant pressing, he continued on, "The price of the fruit of the Tree of Elders is between 600 and 700 pounds, and the blood of a Mirror Dragon doesn't exceed 100 pounds. I don't remember the exact amount."

He quoted her the original price and frankly added, "But you'll have to pay me an extra fifty, no—one hundred pounds. As you know, I'll have to take

on a risk and waste my time."

This was what Emlyn learned from Sherlock Moriarty. He felt that this was very good and reasonable, because a middleman needed to be paid!

"Deal!" Audrey happily chose to accept as soon as he finished speaking.

She knew such matters could still be negotiable, but she didn't think it was necessary. She was afraid that the deal was off if she angered the other party.

To me, the most important thing is to advance to Sequence 7… Emperor Roselle once said that any problem that can be solved with money isn't a problem… Audrey's recently heavy mood improved.

After the New Year Ball, she had received control of her fortune worth 40,000 pounds. She just needed to hire some accountants and management staff sent by her father.

At the same time, she received gifts of more than 20,000 pounds in jewelry, horses, hounds, paintings, etc. Most of them came from her mother, two elder brothers, and other members of the Hall family.

As for the cash, she didn't have much. It was only 5,000 pounds.

Her contribution to the Backlund's great haze had been turned into Earl Hall's political resources by her own request to be kept anonymous, so there was no reward. For this, the great aristocratic banker offered to pay for any expenses his little angel had in the field of mysticism.

Of course, Audrey didn't dare reveal her intention to aim for Sequence 7. She could still only use her pocket money and savings.

Well, I'll be able to pay off my debt to Glaint by this month. Next month, I can pay 2,000 pounds to Mr. Fool's adorer… I won't be tight at all… Audrey thought in a good mood.

…*Very rich*… Emlyn almost failed to react before asking, puzzled, "How do we complete the deal?"

Audrey explained with a faint smile, "By making a sacrifice to Mr. Fool."

She was very proactive in obtaining The Fool's consent, conjuring the corresponding ritual requirements.

When Emlyn received the two goatskin parchments, he stared at them in a daze. The way they traded was beyond his imagination.

Only then did he deeply understand how the Tarot Club was different from a normal secret organization.

Watching the transactions between the members, Klein was very pleased. This was because with the passage of time, the channels and resources that were open to the Tarot Club would continue to increase. Everyone's goals and items that they wanted would be much simpler to obtain than in the past. It would no longer be in a state of having no response when making requests.

Miss Justice represents the Psychology Alchemists, the Loen aristocrats, and the power of money… Mr. Hanged Man represents the Church of Storms and the resources at sea. Mr. Sun represents the Forsaken Land of the Gods and the City of Silver. Miss Magician represents the Low- and Mid-Sequence Beyonders in Backlund and the Abraham family. The Moon represents the Sanguine. All of them will perfect the Tarot Club's trading resources and news gathering capabilities… They're all about to advance… While he was thinking, Klein controlled The World and said in a hoarse voice, "I have a clue to a characteristic left behind by a Psychiatrist. Miss Justice, would you have any need for it?"

Klein hadn't chosen to snatch Emlyn's business because he knew Miss Justice also reared a pet of the same pathway. He wasn't afraid that there wouldn't be any demand.

"Of course." Audrey hardly hesitated.

Her idea was very simple. If met with an enemy attack, it might not be enough to just rely on herself to provide a surprise. Adding on Susie, who would be even more surprising, it would make things more assuring.

"This will take a certain amount of time, perhaps a month, or even two months," The World added in a low voice.

"No problem." Audrey was under no psychological pressure.

She knew that Susie hadn't finished digesting the Telepathist potion.

Phew, as long as this deal is closed. I hope I can release the Psychiatrist as soon as possible… Miss Justice didn't seem to ask about the price. To her, with The Fool's supervision, the price wouldn't be too outrageous. She would accept it as long as it isn't too outrageous? Her finances have improved a lot recently… Klein made The World look at The Hanged Man and give a low chuckle.

"Are you interested in helping me sell an item?

"The price isn't less than 3,500 pounds. You'll be given a 15% commission fee."

"Pleasure to work with you," Alger first agreed to it before asking with interest, "What is the item?"

He was rather curious about The World. He felt that the other party knew a lot and had no lack of good things.

"A characteristic left behind by a Beyonder and is equal to a Sequence 6. The main purpose is to allow a person to change their appearance and build. There's the addition of powers such as close combat and control over fire. Of course, the effects that can be produced will depend on the Artisan's ideas and standard." The World chuckled.

Changing appearance and build… I really want it… Audrey and Fors had the same idea at the same time.

The only difference was that the latter was only entertaining the thought, but Audrey opened her mouth and asked with sparkling eyes, "Mr. Hanged Man, can I preorder the mystical item produced by the Artisan using this characteristic? As long as the effect of changing one's appearance remains!"

Father will definitely agree to me buying a mystical item that doesn't have any negative side effects! Audrey added, in an exceptionally relaxed manner, in her heart.

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CHAPTER 488
LIVING EXPENSES

Preordering a mystical item? Alger was stunned for a second before he realized what Miss Justice was talking about.

The limits of his mind were widened, and he felt that there was room for exploitation.

In a particular sense, the Beyonder characteristic The World has entrusted to me has been sold. There is a definite destination to the item… I can easily simplify the process and make things benefit me more easily. That is to say, I don't have to sell it to the Artisan again. Instead, I should choose to entrust the work. This way, I don't have to worry about whether the characteristic can be sold. I can receive the commission from The World and also obtain more profit from Miss Justice's side. The only capital I need to put up is the fabrication fees for entrusting the job. Of course, I have to consider if the Artisan will be willing to promise to take the risk…

Many thoughts flashed through his mind as he quickly weighed the pros and cons and finally came to a decision.

"No problem, I'll take care of this matter." He looked at Miss Justice and felt that she was emitting a blinding light of gold.

Even after joining the Church of Storms and drifting out at sea for so many years, he had never encountered someone like that anywhere else.

There were plenty of sea merchants, and even more wealthy people, but none of them really didn't care about money.

Has Miss Justice's financial situation improved to this extent? Klein was shocked too.

For a moment, he wanted to speak out to urge her to pay the 2,000 pounds she owed to his adorer as soon as possible, but, considering that he had already agreed to Miss Justice postponing her repayment until February or March, he could only keep silent and not ruin his image as The Fool.

At the very least, the money for the Faceless Beyonder characteristic would be available soon. The speed only depends on how Mr. Hanged Man contacts that particular Artisan and the speed at which the Artisan can produce the mystical item… Unfortunately, I can only rely on Mr. Hanged Man to contact an Artisan for the time being. Otherwise, I can directly sell the special characteristic to Miss Justice without having to pay a commission… With this in mind, Klein's mood became mixed.

After finalizing a big deal, Alger heaved a silent sigh of relief, feeling his financial situation slowly improve.

After thinking for a few seconds, he asked, "Ladies and gentlemen, which one of you has a way or item to make everyone on board a ship sleep at the same time?"

The reason why Alger still hasn't gone to that primitive island to hunt down the Blue Shadow Falcon was that he hadn't thought of a method of leaving the Blue Avenger, as well as the ten or so sailors and crew members of the Church without garnering any suspicion.

Let everyone on a boat fall into a deep sleep? The first thing Klein thought of was the Biological Poison Bottle, but the effect of this thing was completely uncontrollable, so he was afraid that the outcome wouldn't look too good.

Then, he remembered the Nightmare soul in Creeping Hunger. Making people fall into a deep sleep and dragging them into dreams were specialties of this Beyonder job.

But the problem lies in the fact that a Nightmare is unable to make that many people fall asleep at the same time. The limit to its influence doesn't exceed ten. To satisfy Mr. Hanged Man's request, it needs to be a Sequence 5 of the corresponding pathway or even that of a demigod… Klein struck down the thought and didn't let The World speak.

At the same time, Audrey, Fors, and Derrick either shook their heads in response or answered with "no."

Emlyn tried to recall and said, "I can help you ask. Perhaps us Sanguine have some mystical items that have a similar effect in the clan."

*Always saying "us Sanguine"…In the future, I can convince him by targeting this angle… *Alger noticed this and nodded with a smile.

"I'll have to trouble you."

Seeing that the transactions were coming to an end, Klein quickly got The World to bring up his latest necessities.

"Everyone, help me keep an eye out on the remnant spirituality of ancient wraiths and a pair of eyes from a six-winged gargoyle."

Other than that, the supplementary ingredients weren't too hard to purchase. He didn't think it was necessary to go through the Tarot Club.

"Alright." Derrick was the first to respond. Then, he added, feeling somewhat embarrassed, "Mr. World, the method for removing the mental corruption of a Beyonder characteristic will still require some time. I should be able to advance to Sequence 7 soon."

With that said, he looked to his side.

"Mr. Hanged Man, once I return to the City of Silver, I'll make a list of the commonly seen monsters in the vicinity."

He had kept everything he owed others and every promise he made without fulfilling them in mind. These plagued him to the point that he couldn't even sleep in peace.

"No problem," the gloomy World indifferently said.

Klein really wasn't in a hurry. He hadn't finished concluding his Faceless principles, and his digestion of the potion had only just begun. It would still take several months.

Therefore, his plan wasn't to head straight for the Gargas Archipelago. Instead, he would act as an adventurer and a traveler as he worked his way through the colonial islands. From time to time, he would change his identity and experience life in order to extract the Faceless principles.

During this process, he would inquire more about mermaids in detail. After knowing that the Church of the Goddess reared such spiritual creatures and that they possessed High-Sequence potion formulas of the Seer pathway, Klein kept feeling worried about traps placed against every Faceless in the Gargas Archipelago who sought advancement.

In other words, Klein had to spend two to three months or more time traveling and adventuring on the Sonia Sea. This long period of time was long enough for The Sun to obtain a potion formula, gather the corresponding ingredients, and ascend to the Sequence 7 Solar High Priest.

With the conclusion of the transaction portion of the gathering, the Tarot Club members entered the period for free communication.

Audrey didn't disappoint The Hanged Man's expectations by standing up first and raising the ends of her skirt, bowing towards the very end of the long bronze table.

"Honorable Mr. Fool, I would like to know the hidden truth behind Backlund's Great Smog. Is it purely a result of those cultists' bid to awaken

the Primordial Demoness and to allow the True Creator's descent? Why did Prince Edessak choose to cooperate with them?

"According to your principle of equivalent exchange that was set by you, what do I need to pay in order to obtain the relevant information?"

If I knew, things would've been completely resolved now… The experienced Klein maintained his relaxed posture, chuckled and said, "There's no need.

"The root of the problem hasn't been discovered yet, but there are enough clues. I hope the members of the three Churches aren't too stupid."

*The root of the problem hasn't been discovered yet? Mr. Fool has made his adorer give the Churches and the military a certain amount of clues? *Audrey was rather shocked when she heard this, but she felt that this wasn't too surprising within her previous concerns and worries.

"Thank you for your answer." She sincerely bowed once more.

"Is Backlund still in danger?" Fors suddenly felt uneasy.

After Miss Justice sat down, Klein controlled The World to chuckle and say, "Mr. Hanged Man, I discovered the Baelen person you mentioned."

"The Baelen who was involved in the escape of many slaves from the colonial islands?" The Hanged Man replied with disbelief.

"Yes, reddish-brown skin, of Southern Continent descent, Backlund accent, and the third tooth on his left fake," The World answered hoarsely.

"…It should be him." Alger recalled for two seconds before saying, "Where is he? What's his present identity? Also, Mr. World, do you wish to receive 100 pounds in cash directly or an item of equivalent worth."

This was the mission of the Church of Storms, and purchasing clues was a reimbursable act; therefore, The Hanged Man wasn't pressured at all.

Of course money! Klein, who was vexing over his living expenses, controlled The World to say, "100 pounds in cash.

"Baelen is in Backlund. He was seen meeting a member of MI9 who was loyal to the royal family. I don't know who it was exactly, because he was wearing a mask."

A member of MI9 who was loyal to the royal family… The Hanged Man ruminated over the words, and then he remembered Miss Justice's question: Why did Prince Edessak work with the Aurora Order and the Demoness Sect?

It also points to the royal family… Can the two cases be one and the same? The truth behind all this involves the disappearance of the slaves? Alger felt that he could vaguely see some key points.

"You really are a well-informed and well-connected person. The 100 pounds in cash will be paid tomorrow," Alger calmly said his thanks.

"Heh." The World laughed and turned to look at The Sun.

"Kid, do you know ancient Hermes?"

Derrick didn't try to hide anything as he replied honestly, "I've heard of the Hermes language, but the City of Silver doesn't have that kind of knowledge."

During the Second Epoch, there was no distinction between Hermes and ancient Hermes. It was only some time during the Fourth Epoch that ancient Hermes was simplified accordingly, making it easier to be used, taught, and disseminated for daily use. However, it no longer had such a strong and direct effect on rituals. That is to say, the Hermes spoken by Little Sun is equal to ancient Hermes… There really is a person known as Hermes in the history of the City of Silver… Klein secretly nodded and said, "A pity; I wanted to ask you for a favor."

At this moment, Audrey remembered something from their conversation. It was something that originated from the Psychology Alchemists.

She had intended to communicate directly, but after looking at the new member, Mr. Moon, she felt that she didn't understand him too well, so she raised her hand slightly and said, "Honorable Mr. Fool, I have something to report to you."

Klein nodded slightly and isolated the senses of everyone else.

"What is it?" he asked in a calm manner.

Audrey said, honestly, "I got some information from the Psychology Alchemists. The most important thing is that they were founded after excavating the ruins of Hermes, who was the master who created ancient Hermes."

The ruins of Hermes? This old gentleman was still alive a hundred or two hundred years ago… Had he deliberately guided the Psychology Alchemists to discover the relics, or had he perished in the Roselle incident? Klein was stunned for a moment. After deliberating for a moment, he smiled and reminded her, "Hermes is a member of the Twilight Hermit Order."

He didn't mention that Hermes could still be alive, because it was impossible to confirm.

Hermes is a member of the Twilight Hermit Order? The Psychology Alchemists might have something to do with this mysterious organization? Audrey was stunned before she let out a sigh of relief.

Fortunately, I have the Tarot Club and Mr. Fool backing me. Otherwise, I would have no way of knowing and no way to guard against… Once again, she gratefully praised The Fool.

At this point, Klein wanted to comfort Miss Justice, so that she wouldn't be too distressed and worried about the Backlund incident. Maturing didn't

mean that she had to give up positive moods and smiles. It wouldn't affect her ability to take things seriously and would instead help her persevere for a longer period of time. However, after consideration, in order to maintain his image as The Fool, he had to give up this advice he gained from being a former Clown.

He then removed the isolation barriers around the other members, waiting for the end of the exchange and for the end of this Tarot Gathering.

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CHAPTER 489
HELD UP SUGGESTION

After another round of conversations, Derrick suddenly asked a question, "Honorable Mr. Fool, what kind of hand gesture should we use when we would like to thank you usually?"

Hand gesture? Klein was momentarily stumped by Little Sun's question.

It had never occurred to him to imitate the gesture of drawing a clockwise circle from the Church of the Goddess, nor the Church of Storms's prayer gesture of striking the left of one's chest with their right fist.

*This is probably the last bottom line of a fake god… *He lampooned inwardly.

Seeing Mr. Fool smile without a word as though he was waiting for her and others to make suggestions, Audrey suddenly had a lot of inspiration and came up with a new question.

Her eyes sparkled as she looked around and said, "Everyone, should we design a secret gesture to indicate our identity? Our Tarot Club doesn't have many members at present, so there's no need to worry about us appearing at the same spot and ending up opposing each other due to various reasons. But in the future, it might be very difficult to avoid that. We need a set of unique 'signals,' so as to identify friend from foe."

I have an idea for that… Klein suddenly remembered the secret hand gestures he knew from his previous life, such as the hand-in-waistcoat.

Just as he was about to manipulate The World to make a suggestion, The Hanged Man opened his mouth.

"No, Miss Justice, I don't think it's a good idea.

"Compared to other secret organizations, our Tarot Club's most striking characteristic is that the members do not know each other. Even if… Uh— Let me raise an extreme example. Even if one of our members are captured and interrogated, they wouldn't be able to affect the others unless there's someone who can resist Mr. Fool and enter this place directly. And that is clearly impossible.

"Once we have a full set of signals and passcodes, traitors can allow the opposing faction to use these means to fish us out one by one.

"Are you that eager to flaunt your identities as Tarot Club members?"

"…” Audrey temporarily failed to provide a rejoinder as she stammered, "But…”

"It's reasonable to worry about the situation you mentioned, but this can be avoided through our fixed interaction every week and creating a temporary gesture ahead of time, as well as praying to Mr. Fool." In consideration that she would be providing him large amounts of gold, Alger's tone gradually turned pleasant.

Audrey replied with some understanding, "The simplest example is that at the Tarot Gathering on Monday, we'll first understand if there's a possibility of us bumping into another member, to the point of entering a conflict. Hence, we'll design a set of temporary gestures to identify ourselves. After the matter is over, we would immediately abandon that gesture. Uh, if there's any sudden situation and we're unable to communicate in time, or if there's some suspicion, we can seek an opportunity to pray to Mr. Fool to confirm if another member is participating in the same event?"

"Something like that." Alger let out a silent breath.

At that moment, Derrick suddenly said in enlightenment, "Sorry, I asked a foolish question. Mr. Fool never mentioned any gestures to thank 'Him' because he was worried about us exposing ourselves."

He immediately looked to the end of the long bronze table.

"Your wish steers our path."

I just thought of a special hand gesture… Klein chuckled and replied, "That's right."

He cast his gaze towards the other members and said in a composed manner, "Let us end today's gathering here."

"By your will!" All the members apart from The Moon stood up at the same time.

Emlyn froze for a second before standing up in a flurry, mimicking the bows of the other members.

A deep red light immediately appeared in front of his eyes, and he felt his body plummet slightly.

Soon after, his vision returned to normal and he saw dolls of various sizes in his room.

Phew… Only until this moment did Emlyn White completely calm down as he recalled his first Tarot Gathering.

Apart from Mr. Fool, the other members don't seem too powerful. Could they be like me, chosen for various reasons? I have the Ancestor backing me, so who's backing them?

What a joke. I originally imagined The Sun to be a demigod who just escaped the pursuit of an angel. It turned out that he's only a Sequence 8 and seeking to advance to Sequence 7!

A child who doesn't know manners definitely isn't an adult yet! However, the City of Silver that he mentioned and the experiences that he had undergone are very strange. I have to find an opportunity to ask Lord Nibbs, no—I have to first ask Cosmi, as well as my parents. I'll see if they know anything about the City of Silver. Humph, how dare the history books of the City of Silver tamper with the feats of us Sanguine!

Miss Justice is from Backlund. She's very, very rich. Is she the daughter of some rich banker or the daughter of some noble? Perhaps she's a banker or noble herself…

Miss Magician looked at me very strangely. She must admire the lofty Sanguine. She doesn't speak much and didn't divulge much about herself. Yes, she's a quiet girl.

Mr. Hanged Man is a mature gentleman. He knows a lot and has a sublime character. He's willing to answer questions from new members and is willing to provide the corresponding help and information. It can be said that he's very popular. The Sun and The World are both willing to ask him questions and seek his help.

The World is quite an unlikeable person. When he speaks, it's like there's phlegm in his throat that he can't spit out. I would disdain even drinking such a person's blood. It has a dirty taste… He's very introverted and is good at hiding his emotions. Furthermore, he easily produced a Sequence 6 Beyonder characteristic and promised to provide a Psychiatrist Beyonder characteristic in two months… Very impressive!

As the details flashed through his mind, Emlyn discovered that the Tarot Club was simple, but also not very simple. Furthermore, Mr. Fool didn't interfere much with the development of the gathering.

"He" seems to only be interested in the so-called Roselle's diary… But "He" is willing to offer convenient services on the level of miracles to his members. At this thought, Emlyn couldn't help but feel a little proud of his identity as The Moon.

Surveying the room of dolls, he recalled his own problem.

A relic worth 4,000 to 5,000 pounds. A chance to become a baron in a short period of time. This is really putting me in a difficult position…

At this moment, although Emlyn hadn't made his final decision yet, he felt the room grow darker, as though he were shouldering a heavy debt.

…

In the ancient palace above the fog.

Klein pressed his thumb and middle finger of his right hand to one temple and gently rubbed it.

He quickly sat up in the silent environment, allowing a small badge to fly out from the pile of junk and land on the long bronze table in front of him. The badge was only the size of an eyeball. On the surface, there were symbols that symbolized "fate" and "concealment." It was the item that Klein had found on Lanevus's body.

On its back, it was inscribed with the words "You can join if you have this item" in ancient Hermes. It also provided the corresponding information for the gathering: "January 4th, 1350, 8 p.m. in Babur Valley."

The question Klein needed to consider now was whether he should take the badge to the Babur Valley tomorrow night to try his luck.

Frankly speaking, he was inclined to not delving deeper. Even though he had already advanced to Faceless and was able to put on a perfect disguise, he didn't want to take the risk, because he didn't know anything about the gathering.

A Magician never performs unprepared… He muttered softly, took out a gold coin, and held it between his fingers.

He picked up the badge with his other hand and muttered to himself, "It's risky to attend the gathering in Babur Valley."

After repeating this a few times, he finally flicked the gold coin.

The gold coin tumbled down and stood upright in the palm of his hand.

This meant that the divination had failed.

"As expected…" Klein wasn't surprised.

This isn't a problem of insufficient information, but rather the complete absence of it.

He sat there in silence, letting the gold coin weave between his fingers.

In the end, Klein overcame his curiosity and adventurous spirit and decided not to go.

But that doesn't mean that I can't get involved. Tomorrow at 8 p.m., hmm… He smiled faintly and returned to the real world.

…

4th January, 10:35 a.m.

Klein stood in front of a mahogany table and picked up a stack of bills.

There were five ten-pound notes and ten five-pound for a total of one hundred pounds. This was the payment which The Hanged Man had just paid via a sacrifice.

The fifteen notes made Klein's wallet much fuller, and he was finally able to buy his ticket in peace.

Putting his wallet away, he picked up a thin human-skinned glove on the table and put it on his left hand.

One of the main features of "Creeping Hunger" was that it had a camouflage effect when it wasn't in use and couldn't be detected by most Beyonder means; therefore, Klein was able to switch between its original appearance, gloves of various colors, and camouflaging it as skin. This time, he chose black gloves.

To that end, Klein had specially prepared an individual black glove for his right hand.

Soon after, he placed the brown Biological Poison Bottle into a metal box, sealed it with a wall of spirituality, and stuffed it into the inside pocket of his clothes.

As for the Sun Brooch, as long as he wore it and carried it with him, it would create a hot summer feeling. Klein had no choice but to put it in his iron cigarette case and hide it at the bottom of his suitcase.

9 purifying bullets, 15 demon-hunting bullets, 3 exorcism bullets… Klein took out his revolver and a cartridge box, silently counting as he loaded them.

Pa!

He closed the cylinder, inserted the revolver into his underarm holster, put on his black tweed coat and half top hat, picked up his cane and suitcase, and walked out of the hotel room.

Apart from the All-Black Eye and the other items that he couldn't use still being above the gray fog, he was fully armed.

Taking a carriage, Klein arrived at the Pritz Harbor Ticket Company located in White Rose Borough.

This company was located in a rather old three-story building. There was a wooden notice board on the door.

Klein walked over and stopped there. He casually glanced at the board which said:

"Things to take note:

"1. Maintain order. Lines are strictly enforced;

"2. Do not urinate or defecate, as well as spitting;

"3. Find the guard in the lobby if there is a dispute;

"4. Do not open canned wolf-fish in any of the rooms!"

Canned wolf-fish? What's that? Klein raised his eyebrows.

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CHAPTER 490
WARNING OF A FORMER SAILOR

The lobby of the Pritz Harbor Ticket Company was rather spacious, with seven ticketing windows, but there were already a dozen or so people lined up in front of each.

Klein took a glance and didn't directly go to the one with the fewest people. Instead, he took two steps to the right and arrived in front of an erected brown board.

There were many pieces of white paper pasted on the wooden board, announcing all the information about the recent week's passenger ships, including their destinations, the ports they passed, and the prices of the different cabins.

Before Klein could take a closer look, a staff member came over and drew a red circle on the second-class cabin of one line, marking it with a single phrase: "Sold out."

"So popular…" Klein sighed.

"Of course, Pritz Harbor is the kingdom's largest port. Countless people pass through here to the Southern Continent and the colonial islands to seek out opportunities," a middle-aged man who was standing next to the wooden board replied in a clearly boastful manner.

He was wearing a black bonnet and a black-and-white checkered uniform similar to that of the police, but he had no epaulets. All he had was a seagull

badge hanging from his chest—exactly identical to the logo of the Pritz Harbor Ticket Company.

The middle-aged man's face, hands, and all of his exposed skin were bronze in color and rather rough. It was as if he had been exposed to the sea breeze and the sun for many years to the point of giving people the feeling that he had salt in his wrinkles.

Find the guard in the lobby if there's a dispute… This should be the guard… Klein remembered the things he had to pay attention to at the door. He didn't mind that the other party had taken the initiative to talk to him. He smiled and said, "You seem to understand this port very well?"

Hearing this question, the middle-aged man replied quite smugly, "I was once a sailor with the kingdom's navy, and their main base was located at Pritz Harbor's Oak Island. I served for fifteen years and spent a long time in the sea around here. If it wasn't for East Balam's war destroying my health, then I could be a sailor for another ten years! I know this port as well as I know my wife's body! "

A little cultured but also a little vulgar… Klein casually chatted with him, having the intention of asking about news on the sea.

"You became a guard here after retiring?"

"No, I was crammed into a night school for two whole years as a student and as a gatekeeper. Holy Lord of Storms, can you imagine the scene of someone my age reciting with a bunch of teenagers? And they know and remember words faster than I do!" The guard showed an expression that showed how unbearable it was to reflect on the past.

As he spoke, he patted his thigh and sighed.

"Unfortunately, my knees can't stand wet weather; otherwise, I would be a part-time teacher at night. Those kids will make you feel young, but I won't

deny that it's because I want to earn more money. When you have a wife and four children, you have to realize that you have to support your family."

Sir, you talk a little too much… Maybe that's why the ticket company hired you as a guard… Klein smiled and didn't continue with the man's topic.

"I just saw the things to take note of at the door and found that canned wolf-fish are not permitted to be opened here. Frankly speaking, I've never heard of such a thing."

The guard's expression suddenly became complicated.

He pinched his nose and said, "It's a food that's popular in places like the east coast of Feysac and the Gargas Archipelago. It's wolf-fish pickled in salt, but it retains the blood, and the smell—the smell is very, very stimulating. It stinks and it's disgusting!"

It turns out to be a food of unknown origins… Klein laughed and said, "But I don't think anyone would specially eat canned food while waiting in line to buy a ticket, right?"

"No, you don't understand that feeling. Perhaps, one day you will." The guard showed a look of lingering fear. "There was once a barbarian from the north who came here to buy a ticket. As there were already many people lined up in front, causing the hall to look like a barrel filled with fish, he became very anxious, so he opened a can of wolf-fish. In less than ten seconds, only he and a few guys were left in the lobby."

This… this is a biological weapon… An ordinary version of my Biological Poison Bottle… Klein laughed.

"In the end, he successfully bought a ticket, and a new point to take note of was added outside?"

"The result wasn't as he expected. The lady and the gentleman in charge of ticket sales also escaped. Heh heh, as you know, the brains of barbarians are

even worse than that of curly-haired baboons!" The guard chuckled. "When I was a sailor, there was a rumor at sea that a group of pirates controlled a merchant ship from Rolls. Ah, that's a city on the east coast of Feysac. In short, the pirates eagerly opened their spoils, but who knew that they were barrels filled to the brim with wolf-fish. Can you guess the outcome? They fainted, vomited, and lost their fighting power, and the crew received their bounty reward."

"Good story." Klein tried not to laugh.

He returned his gaze to the pieces of paper on the wooden board and searched for information for a ship scheduled to depart on 5th January.

As a professional, he had previously divined which date was suitable for setting sail on this week. It came out to be the 5th and 8th. And among the passenger ships that headed to the Rorsted Archipelago, the Saint Havre and the White Agate suited him the most.

*There are still tickets, and the prices are about the same: four pounds for third-class, ten pounds for second-class, and thirty-five pounds for first-class… People who depend on the sea for survival more or less believe in the Lord of the Storms. Even in countries like Intis and Feysac, there are fishermen and crew who secretly believe in this forbidden deity, in a bid to be safe out at sea… The name Saint Havre originates from the Church of Storms. It has a certain background… *Klein thought it over. He was inclined to choose the White Agate.

Not in a rush to make a decision, he turned to look at the guard.

"Do you know anything about the White Agate?"

The guard immediately smiled.

"Sir, you have a good eye. The White Agate is a steam-powered ship, but it also retains a sail. Its maximum speed is 16 knots.

"Also, the captain is very experienced. He was once the boatswain of the Royal Navy's William V. No—it should be the Imperial Navy. The king has always claimed that he obtained the title of Emperor in Balam. Heh, in the Imperial Navy, no matter how outstanding or excellent the average person is, he can at most become a boatswain. He cannot be an officer unless—unless you can satisfy your superior, regardless of what method is used! Only then can you be recommended to the Pritz Naval Academy as a reserve officer!

"This is how Elland was forced to leave the navy and ended up joining the White Agate where he slowly became Captain one step at a time.

"I suggest you choose a first-class cabin. That way, you'll have rooms for three to four servants, an attendant who has received etiquette lessons, an appointed chef who has excellent culinary skills, a quiet restaurant where you can enjoy the scenery, a special room for smoking cigars, and a place where you can gather and play cards…”

Hearing the guard's detailed explanation, Klein couldn't help but feel suspicious.

Noticing his expression, the guard smiled in embarrassment.

"Elland was my boss in the past. He would often treat me to drinks and ask me to help him promote the first-class cabins. But you can rest assured that everything I say is true!"

This really isn't the problem; it's a problem with money… Klein silently said to himself.

Having made up his mind, he asked after some deliberation, "Sir, what advice do you have for a maritime adventurer?"

To suit Gehrman Sparrow's identity, Klein had modified his image slightly to make himself seem colder and sharper.

"Adventurer?" The guard unconsciously raised his voice.

Many people in the queue turned to look at Klein.

Based on his spiritual intuition, Klein instinctively traced a line of sight.

He saw a man in his thirties wearing a black top hat. He had a boorish face, weather-beaten wrinkles, a strong but not tall body, and pale blue eyes that had experienced a lot.

Another adventurer? Klein and the man looked away just as their eyes met.

At that moment, the guard squeezed out a smile and said, "I'm sorry, I'm a bit too sensitive on the term adventurer. In my opinion, this is equivalent to a fugitive, a sea villain, and a person who goes against his pledges. No, I'm not talking about you.

"You want sincere advice? I… Uh, you have to remember three things.

"First, do not provoke pirates. Second, do not provoke pirates. Third, do not provoke pirates!

"Unless you're a member of the navy or the Church, do not go against the pirates!"

"Eh… Don't be fooled by the enthusiasm of the island girls. They're either pirates or want you to take them to Pritz, to Backlund. It's not entirely their fault. In order to cheat them of their bodies, many sailors, crew, and passengers paint them a very attractive metropolis and a very beautiful life, then kick them out of their beds and abandon them, leaving them in their original spots."

What a bunch of vile people… In this era, people who live on the sea can't be too kind… Is the order at sea that bad? Pirates are this rampant? Klein nodded and said, "Thank you, I know what to do now."

Saying this, he walked over to the line with the least number of people.

Behind him, the guard shouted, "And the legends of treasure at sea are all fake!"

…

After buying a second-class ticket for the White Agate, Klein returned to the hotel and waited patiently for the night to descend.

In the process, he had enjoyed the most famous fried fish in the Pritz Harbor. He thought that the taste was pretty good, but he definitely couldn't accept eating it all the time.

When it was close to eight o'clock, he went above the gray fog, holding the badge from Lanevus in one hand and writing the corresponding sentence in the other.

"The situation of the gathering this time."

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. When his pocket watch struck eight, he closed his eyes, leaned back in his chair, and began to recite the divination statement.

He had reason to believe that when the door of the gathering opened, he would be able to divine something above the gray fog with the aid of this medium which had locked onto the location!

He had failed before because nothing had happened yet, but this was different. Things were happening now, and Klein had the right medium!

Soon, Klein entered a gray, blurry dream world.

He saw the Tussock River flowing quietly, a wide river valley on the two sides, and about a dozen people in different positions. They were shrouded in thin light, vanishing indistinctively or illusorily.

One of them had black hair and green eyes. He looked quite handsome, and he was a familiar face to Klein.

Leonard Mitchell!

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CHAPTER 491
THE SHERLOCK MORIARTY IN THE INVESTIGATION REPORT

Leonard?

Klein thought for a moment that he was mistaken.

However, the blurring caused by the rays of light wasn't that serious. Being familiar with Leonard, he was able to quickly confirm his previous judgment.

In the time it took to take a breath, Leonard disappeared, the light dispersed, and the valley returned to its midwinter silence. The scene which Klein saw in the dream shattered as a result.

He opened his eyes and placed the badge he had obtained from Lanevus on the surface of the long bronze table.

Is it really Leonard, or a Faceless disguised as Leonard? Klein considered and flipped a gold coin.

His spirituality had told him through the medium that it was Leonard Mitchell, his teammate from the Tingen Nighthawks team!

Is he the "investigator" sent by the Church of the Goddess for the gathering, or is he risking his life to find an opportunity to find the revenge target while keeping the Nighthawks in the dark? Klein muttered to himself in suspicion. It was hard to make an accurate judgment.

And without any leads, his divination couldn't provide him with any revelations.

After a few seconds of silence, Klein gave a self-deprecating smile as he drew a crimson moon on his chest.

"I wish him the best of luck. May the Goddess watch over him."

Klein no longer bothered with the problem, and he planned on understanding more about the gathering before deciding whether or not to participate in the future or to warn Leonard Mitchell anonymously.

…

Backlund, in a secret room in the basement of the Steam Cathedral.

Ikanser took off his hat, pressed down his fluffy but not soft hair, and sat in the first seat on the left.

Then, he took out the ancient silver mirror of Arrodes from an inner custom-made pocket in his clothes and placed it in front of him.

To his right, across him, and diagonally across him, were the Machinery Hivemind deacons and captains, all of whom had been summoned by the member of the Divine Council, the Archbishop of Backlund, Horamick Haydn, for a meeting.

The white-robed archbishop looked like an ordinary old man, sitting calmly at the end.

Seeing that everyone had arrived, he looked around and softly said, "Let's start with Ikanser. Tell me in sequence about the investigation over the past few days."

Ikanser Bernard pushed his hair while flipping through the thick document file, and he reported in a concise manner, "Your Grace, we were in charge

of Sherlock Moriarty. After a careful investigation, and with the aid of Beyonder means, we confirmed that he was pulled into the matter. Prior to the incident, there was no evidence that he knew of Prince Edessak's problem.

"He and the dead Talim Dumont were friends, and he indirectly fulfilled some of the tasks entrusted to him by the prince, but there weren't many problems. At most, he had falsely made some fraudulent claims for his expenses."

At this point, Ikanser suddenly felt a little worried because Sherlock Moriarty was also an informant for the Machinery Hivemind, and his expenses here were likely to be somewhat exaggerated.

In any case, his job as an informant was very effective and very outstanding, enough to offset a lot of problems, and he hasn't become our informant for long. The money involved was mostly just from commissions… Ikanser exhaled slowly and continued to report, "Our conclusion is that he's considered an innocent party and that there is no hidden plot behind him. He once keenly noticed the danger of Red Rose Manor, but that is a typical example of coming to the correct conclusion from an incorrect deduction. He was afraid of the royal family's internal strife, and for this reason, he had been slow in his work and didn't do any substantial investigations. On this, he had reported it to us.

"Unfortunately, he still failed to avoid the matter, but he was lucky enough. He mentioned that the descendant of Death happened to be monitoring the vicinity of Red Rose Manor at the time; hence, he was rescued from the perilous situation when the meteorite fell. The signs at the scene are ample proof of how terrifying that strike was. It's likely due to 0-08."

Klein mentioned the existence of Ince Zangwill and 0-08 in his letter. As for whether or not he knew the former archbishop and the Grade 0 Sealed Artifact, no one was concerned about it, because he was with Azik Eggers for some time. It was entirely possible that he learned the information from

him. This was also a conclusion that everyone subconsciously came up with.

As for matters regarding Grade 0 and Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts, the seven orthodox churches constantly shared information of the rough situation with each other—the numbers were shared, and there was no repetition.

“…However, we haven't been able to grasp the entire situation. There are three matters that aren't confirmed. First, 2-111 indicates that after Sherlock Moriarty fled into the forest, he didn't immediately escape far away. Instead, he stayed on the spot and prayed to someone. Second, it's still unknown when he and Azik Eggers got to know each other. Third, it's still unknown how he escaped the underground ruins. It's unlikely that he could've done so with his strength. And in this process, he had even destroyed the descent ritual of the Aurora Order," Ikanser finally concluded.

2-111 referred to the magic mirror, Arrodes.

Horamick laughed after he listened to the recount and muttered, "Fraudulent claims of expenses…”

He then cleared his throat.

"In any case, Sherlock Moriarty is a hero of Backlund.

"If he hadn't stopped the ritual in time, and if he had been frightened at that moment and had chosen to flee, then most of us wouldn't be alive sitting here.

"Moreover, he has also displayed his faith in God and his friendliness towards us. As long as there isn't too much of a problem with him, then we can pretend that we don't know anything about his tiny flaws and secrets."

"Your Grace, this is what we were thinking as well." Ikanser heaved a sigh of relief and said, "I guess his prayers in the woods, including the ritual of blowing the copper whistle, were to get in touch with Azik Eggers. But the

effects and speed can be different. In such a critical situation, the only thing he could do was to try to save himself, which is something that we deduced from the follow-up process."

"Apart from trying to save himself, he could write his will," another Machinery Hivemind deacon quipped before he immediately reported the portion he was responsible for. “…We haven't found the underground ruin which Sherlock Moriarty described, even with the help of 2-111. We're still temporarily unable to grasp the locations of the royal family's High-Sequence Beyonders on that very day."

“…It can be confirmed that the Church of Evernight received the information first. This came from a special channel of Earl Hall, but the specific situation is unknown."

“…Most of the forces of the Aurora Order in Backlund have been eliminated by us, the Nighthawks, and the Mandated Punishers. However, I suspect that they still have some hidden strength…”

“…At the time of the incident, Sherlock Moriarty mentioned that Trissy was heading to Backlund, but no one has seen her ever since. According to Sherlock Moriarty, she was a key figure and was renamed Trissy Cheek."

“…It cannot be determined what method the Church of Evernight used to capture the Demoness of Despair and the butler, Funkel. Results via divination tell me that they're still alive, but they aren't free."

…

One by one, the deacons and captains reported on their findings while Horamick half-closed his eyes, seemingly deep in thought.

After a few seconds of silence, he opened his eyes and slowly said, "Put all efforts into finding Trissy Cheek—if she's still alive.

"Pass me all the problems where divination has failed to provide any effective revelations. The Church has a Saint who is good at this, although it's not necessarily more effective than 2-111.

"As for the surveillance and investigation of the royal family's High-Sequence Beyonders, it can be tabled. There's no need to worry. They've always known what we've been doing. It's also a form of warning.

"Continue the search for the underground ruins and report it to the Evernight and Storm Churches.

"Ikanser, ask 2-111 how Sherlock Moriarty escaped the ruins, as well as when he got to know Azik Eggers."

Ikanser looked at the archbishop, then at his colleagues before gritting his teeth and said, "Yes, Your Grace."

He was sadly convinced that his legends were about to spread from just a few Machinery Hiveminds teams that he was in charge of to all the Beyonders of the Church of the God of Steam in Backlund.

After a very well-rehearsed process, he opened his mouth and said, "Honorable Arrodes, my question is: 'when did Sherlock Moriarty get to know Azik Eggers?'"

The silver mirror which seemed to have eyes on both sides suddenly started to glow with an aqueous light, quickly forming a scene:

Sherlock Moriarty stood in a room, watching a rat with a rotting belly burrow into a hole a wall. Behind him was Old Kohler and the owner of a budget hotel.

"He got to know Azik Eggers while completing the bounty mission for him. That mission was issued by MI9, which originated from a coincidental conflict." Ikanser interpreted the scene.

With that, he chose to answer the corresponding question. He held his breath as he waited for Arrodes to give the soul-piercing question.

As expected, he saw the bright red words: "Do you know the feeling of trying your best to win the favor of someone, but only to end up being abandoned without any progress?"

Th-this question isn't sharp enough; it's unlike Arrodes's usual style… Ikanser suddenly felt that the blood on the mirror seemed to lack its usual horror and bloody sense. It appeared somewhat weak.

He didn't bother to think about why and immediately opened his mouth to answer, "Yes."

"Congratulations, you got it right." A new line of text appeared on the surface of the silver mirror, its color was somewhat pale.

…

5th January, 9:00 a.m.

With a gray scarf around his neck, Klein arrived at Rose Wharf with his suitcase and cane.

The White Agate was docked there, unusually large compared to the height of a human. It was said to be capable of ferrying hundreds of passengers.

It had the rich characteristics of the age, with its chimneys, sails, and its twelve cannons on both sides of the ship—necessary for defending against pirates and other peers.

Under Captain Elland Kag's arrangement, the chosen stocky sailors and crew lined up at the mouth of the gangway, some even deliberately revealing their legitimate revolvers, rifles, and knives.

This gave the passengers on board the boat a greater sense of security. They were no longer afraid of the journey that would take them nine days to complete.

Klein stood below, looked up, and climbed up the hanging ladder in the undulating blue water.

My travels begin… He took a step forward and sighed silently.

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CHAPTER 492
ADVENTURER

As soon he stepped onto the deck and before he could enter the cabin, Klein saw a figure moving through the crowd towards him through the corner of his eye.

He looked over his shoulder with an air of indifference but hidden vigilance, and he saw a man in his thirties wearing a black half top hat and a windbreaker of the same color.

The other party had a weathered face, looking boorish but extremely masculine. His light blue eyes didn't contain a smile, as if they were immersed in many past events.

He looks a little familiar… Right, he's that guy I noticed at the ticket office yesterday. He seems to be an adventurer as well… He's actually wearing a windbreaker at sea in January. He's quite strong… While lifting his cane with ease and pointing diagonally downwards, Klein said with a smile, "Good morning, we meet again."

It was like he was greeting an old friend.

The boorish man, however, wasn't surprised. He stopped and nodded in a somewhat reserved manner, saying, "Cleves, a former adventurer.

"Mate, are you in the same trade?"

"I thought you knew yesterday. Gehrman Sparrow," Klein responded with a smile.

He didn't pass his cane to his left hand, because he didn't intend to shake Cleves's hand.

"I can tell." Cleves maintained two seconds of silence and said, "Being an adventurer isn't a beautiful profession. I've already switched careers and have become a bodyguard. This time, I'm accompanying my employer's family to the capital of the Rorsted Archipelago."

He half-turned and pointed to another spot on the deck.

Klein traced where he was pointing and saw nearly ten people gathered together. They were led by a plump middle-aged gentleman with ruddy cheeks and spirited eyes. On his double-breasted suit, Klein could see the gold chain from his pocket watch and a jeweled collar brooch.

Next to him was a lady in a wide-brimmed hat, her face completely hidden by the dark-blue muslin that hung down, and her figure wasn't too bad.

Standing in front of the couple were two children. The younger one was a boy who wasn't even ten years old. He was wearing a child's version of a tailcoat. The older one was 15 or 16 years old and was a lively and energetic teenage girl. Her looks couldn't be considered outstanding, but her pair of brown eyes were quite bright and intelligent. Her faint freckles and puffy dress added to her playfulness.

Around them were three people carrying suitcases and all sorts of items—a man and two women, all dressed as servants. One of the maids had brownish skin, clearly of Southern Continent heritage.

The bodyguards protecting the seven people were a man and a woman. They were dressed simply and neatly in white shirts, light sweaters, black coats, dark trousers, and sturdy leather boots.

The two bodyguards deliberately didn't hide the outlines created made by the gun holsters by their waists. They didn't relax as they inspected the approaching passersby. Their eyes were sharp and they were composed.

"Three servants and three bodyguards?" Klein asked casually.

*This is quite an extravagant setup, which means that their employer is a rich person… *Instinctively, he made his judgment.

"Yes." Cleves nodded.

Without another word, he quickly turned around and walked towards his employer's family.

"…”

Klein was stunned. He didn't know why Cleves had specially come to greet him for.

After recalling the novels, movies, and television dramas he had seen in his previous life, he gradually understood what Cleves was implying.

He's a little wary of me, or should I say of someone who claims to be an adventurer while not looking like someone to mess with, so he introduced himself in advance to indicate his identity and what his job is. It's to tell me to not have any plans regarding his employer's family. In short, "you do what you do, I do what I do, and we stay out of each other's business”…Is this the tacit understanding between experienced adventurers and veteran bounty hunters? Interesting… Klein chuckled. He carried his suitcase and black cane as he went into the cabin. With the help of his ticket, he found his own room.

With a creak, he pushed open the wooden door and walked in.

The room wasn't very spacious, just large enough to fit a bed, a table, and a cupboard. There weren't even any chairs.

Its greatest advantage was that it came with windows, The wharf's sunlight shone in, illuminating the table and bedside with pure golden spots.

A member of the crew mentioned that the washroom and bathroom are for public use, with about eight rooms sharing one. If someone urgently needs one, then they can provide a wooden toilet, but one must pay the cleaning fee of three pence each time… I have to be grateful that after the White Agate was renovated, it has many metal pipelines laid. Boilers are burning and hot water is being supplied, providing a relatively convenient way of life. Otherwise, my travels wouldn't be a pleasant one… Klein silently sighed.

He quickly took out his necessities and placed them on the table for daily use.

When he was tidying up the place, he sat down on the edge of the bed which wasn't too high, and he listened to the long whistle of the steam whistle. He felt the power that stemmed from steam and machinery contained within it.

When the ship began to set sail, Klein looked out the window at the sea and gradually withdrew his thoughts. He began to think about the most important thing that would happen next—the problem of how to act as a Faceless.

While facing the True Creator's descent ritual and the powerful Mr. A, the decision to give up trying to escape and attempt a sabotage act had allowed his potion to be digested a little. Based on this feedback, he gained some new insights into the acting requirements of a Faceless.

"You can disguise yourself into anyone, but you are ultimately yourself." This is the principle which Nimblewright Master Rosago was made to remember… I originally imagined that "yourself" refers to my original identity, but from the looks of it, that's not the complete picture. What is considered as "yourself" requires serious thought… Klein leaned forward and bathed in the sunlight as though he was a thinking statue.

After a while, he came up with an idea.

Does this correspond to the spirit of one's identity, to their true identity deep down?

Even back on Earth, Zhou Mingrui had worn a lot of facades, which formed a social persona. In a sense, this was a big part of what wasn't real.

Yes… When I become someone else, I take over their identity. In order to not be discovered, I have to disguise myself socially, which is the same as wearing a different mask.

When all the masks are taken down, there will be none left. What kind of "yourself" does a Faceless see at the end of the day?

Is this the deeper meaning behind "yourself" in that principle?

When I face my inner thoughts, overcome my fear, and challenge the impossible without reasons stemming from society, am I really acting as myself?

This is to be explored and verified…

At this thought, Klein changed his position, trying to sit more comfortably.

Remembering everything that had happened before, he found another question regarding acting.

In the underground ruins, I disguised myself as Ince Zangwill and successfully escaped from my predicament, but why didn't I feel any signs of digesting the potion at all?

Does this imply that to digest the Faceless potion, a superficial disguise such as that isn't enough?

Yes, this is closer to the use of Beyonder powers and not acting!

What can stimulate the digestion of the potion is a disguise on a deeper level. Is it being a true substitute for a person, becoming that person on a social level? Only when his relatives and friends are unable to find him for a long period of time does it prove that his disguise was a success?

In that case, the reason why I feel harmony with the Faceless potion is because I had previously disguised myself as Klein Moretti?

The first principle of Faceless is that you can disguise yourself as anyone, but you are ultimately yourself… The second principle is to have a disguise on a deeper level that fools everyone?

But to replace a person and become that person in a societal sense is quite evil just thinking about it…

Don't tell me that I have to find those kinds of people who have died in a foreign land but have a wish that has yet to be fulfilled?

Klein eased his baffling horror, and he drew up an initial direction for his acting attempts.

The higher the Sequence, the more difficult it is to act… He sighed, took out his pocket watch, and checked the time.

Since it was still too early for lunch and the room was too small and cramped, he decided to take a walk on the deck and enjoy the scenery amidst the sea breeze.

After the excitement of the first hour of the voyage, there weren't many people left on deck. Klein walked along the side of the ship, arriving at a secluded area with large shadows.

It's a warm, sunny day… Other than the strong winds which might steal my hat, there are no shortcomings… He pressed the half top hat on his head and leisurely surveyed the cabin, listening to the faint sounds of music coming from inside.

Suddenly, he saw the former adventurer, Cleves, busying himself around the corner. In front of him seemed to be a trident, a dagger, and a short knife.

Cleves sensed this and raised his head to look at him. Keeping a well-seasoned demeanor, he said in a taciturn manner, "We're all old mates, and we have to maintain them frequently."

At this point, he added, "There are children in the cabin."

"Understood." Klein smiled in response.

Cleves lowered his head and continued to busy himself. He casually asked, "You don't seem to have these things with you?"

"I'm used to using weapons that keep abreast with the times," Klein said vaguely. "And I frequently do maintenance."

Cleves silently raised his dagger, looked at it against the sunlight, and said to himself, "At sea, guns alone aren't enough.

"Pirates will board ships, and there will be a lot of people. After you finish shooting your bullets, you won't have the opportunity to reload again. Although these guys no longer keep abreast with the times, they're still useful enough."

*Very professional… As expected of a former adventurer… *Klein leaned against the side of the boat and said half-jokingly, "If there really are pirates boarding the ship, I'm more likely to choose not to fight back."

Cleves turned his head and stared at him for a good three seconds before retracting his gaze. Then, as he packed up his things, he said in a low voice, "It seems that you don't need me to remind you. You've already understood the rules of the sea.

"The bounty hunters who travel the earth are often unable to be adventurers at sea."

He skillfully hid the dagger, short knife, and trident under his clothes, which dazzled Klein.

"Thank you." Klein smiled and nodded.

Without speaking any further, Cleves turned around and returned to the cabin, leaving behind only his broad and deep back.

Klein smirked, shook his head, and turned his gaze to the side of the ship.

Blue waves gently rose up and down, and silvery-white flying fish occasionally leaped out of the water and soared in the air.

This fish can "fly" and swim. They're considered the family of the Lord of Storms by fishermen and sailors, so even if they were caught by nets, they're returned to the sea… Klein was leisurely admiring the surface of the sea under the sunlight, as well as the flying fishes above the surface of the sea. An uncontrollable thought flashed through his mind.

*Hmm, I wonder how good their meat is… *

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CHAPTER 493
HUNTING

"Honorable Arrodes, my second question is: 'How did Sherlock Moriarty escape from the ruins?'" Ikanser's mood was a lot more relaxed than before.

The surface of the silver mirror shimmered, rapidly outlining Sherlock Moriarty leaning his back against the wall, his fists clenching and tightening.

Then, Ikanser Bernard and the surrounding Machinery Hivemind deacons and captains saw the private detective's exaggerated smile before turning around and dashing out with his gun drawn.

At this moment, under the influence of the composed scene, they all felt an inexplicable sense of sadness and excitement.

The image in the mirror jumped, revealing Sherlock Moriarty wielding his revolver as he shot at the altar to no avail. The scene of those disintegrating bullets caused everyone present to be a little worried.

Then, Sherlock Moriarty threw out a brass key, and the altar showed signs of instability due to corruption.

With the erupting air blast, Mr. A fell to the ground and Sherlock Moriarty pathetically fled out of the temple building.

At this point, the image changed to have the slightly turbid Tussock River as the main background. Sherlock Moriarty and Mr. A floated in the water, looking up into the sky where there were no clouds or fog.

Almost instantly, Mr. A. became transparent and disappeared, leaving only Sherlock Moriarty looking around in astonishment.

“…The Church of Evernight's reinforcements?" Ikanser said with a frown. "Unfortunately, he didn't mention what appeared in his letter. We have no way of guessing. Was he trying to sell this secret for a good price, or was he simply affected by it and lost the relevant memories? Also, his experience of escaping from the underground ruins doesn't show anything. It seems like the corresponding clues have been concealed at the same time…”

He analyzed it quickly, in procedural sentences, and then without too great a psychological burden, he chose to answer with reciprocity instead of taking a risk.

Arrodes doesn't seem to be in the mood to be a prankster today. I can make the most of it.… In his self-consolation, Ikanser saw bloody words appear on the surface of the mirror.

With a skip of his heartbeat, he had a bad premonition, suspecting that Arrodes had already recovered to his usual "state."

The blood-like words wiggled and quickly formed into a question:

"Who was the person you gave your all to while trying your best to win the favor of, only to end up being abandoned?"

With his head buzzing, Ikanser's face drained of all its color before flushing red.

The question pierced a deep wound in him while leaving him at a loss as to what to do.

If I mention who he is, then his reputation would be ruined before tonight… I've already become a kind of "legend" in some sense… Ikanser swallowed his saliva with great difficulty and bitterly said, "I choose punishment."

A bolt of lightning immediately descended. However, it was different from before. It was no longer silvery-white and had been dyed with slight green.

It hit him right on the head, causing his hair to stand on end and flash with the color of lightning.

He shook violently like shaking dice, as though he had been drugged with a hallucinogenic drug.

Archbishop Horamick sighed, closed his eyes, and muttered to himself, "A Grade 0 Sealed Artifact?"

When Ikanser recovered, he looked around and said, "There's one more question. Where did the key that Sherlock Moriarty used to destroy the descent ritual come from?

"Which one of you is going to use 2-111?"

All the Machinery Hivemind deacons and captains looked at each other. For a moment, no one responded.

…

The sound of water splashing against the ship's hold seemed to be the only sound left in the world. The sea at night was both noisy and quiet.

Klein suddenly woke up and opened his eyes. He saw the wooden ceiling covered with a crimson moon veil.

His spiritual intuition told him that there was something happening outside.

Is someone having a rendezvous? He tilted his head to listen, vaguely able to hear some unnatural sounds.

He sat up, put on his gloves, and put on his coat.

His eyes turned dark as he took out a gold coin, flipped it, and quickly performed a divination.

After receiving no revelations of danger, he took out the revolver under his pillow and put it in his pocket.

After making the appropriate preparations, Klein opened the door and walked out of the room, following the sound to the upper deck.

At this moment, at sea, away from the industrial pollution, the crimson moon quietly hung there, mysterious and dreamy.

After carefully bypassing a few patrolling crew members, Klein arrived at the area where there was a commotion. He could smell the faint scent of blood.

With the help of the moonlight, he looked over and saw the former adventurer, Cleves, squatting to the side of the ship and setting up something.

There were three people hiding in the shadows of the cabin about a dozen meters away from this gentleman. One of them was a companion of Cleves, the female bodyguard in the black coat, and the remaining two were the children of their employer, a girl of fourteen or fifteen years of age and a young gentleman of no more than ten years of age.

The two youngsters wore thick cotton nightgowns and outer coats. It was obvious that they had come out in a hurry.

They trembled amidst the chilling night wind, but they still squatted there full of energy and vigor, looking at Cleves with their bright eyes.

Playing hide and seek? Klein joked inwardly.

He purposely increased the volume of his footsteps, causing Cleves and the others to turn their gaze towards him.

"Friend, what happened?" Klein recalled the expressions of some bounty hunters he knew in East Borough.

But he still maintained Gehrman Sparrow's unique identity of being cold and sharp.

Cleves replied, unperturbed, "A private job, a hunt that came by accident, but one that's worth looking forward to."

A Hunt? Klein's interest was suddenly piqued.

The reason he had named himself Gehrman was that it represented the first hunter of a game he had played in his previous life, and it suited his idea of hunting evil at sea.

Klein was in no hurry to inquire about the reason. Using his left hand which wore Creeping Hunger, he pointed at the shadow next to him with his left finger, "Private job? Doing a private job in front of your employer?"

Cleves, who was squatting there, glanced at the boy and the girl and said, without changing his tone, "Cecile wasn't careful enough and ended up waking Donna and Denton up. She had no choice but to let them follow."

The girl called Donna wrinkled her nose when she heard her name mentioned. She curiously looked up and asked Klein, "Uncle, are you also an adventurer?"

Uncle? Even if it's the me from Earth, I'm at most 10 years older than you! Klein said in amusement, "No, you can't use the word 'also.' Strictly speaking, I'm the only adventurer here; they're just bodyguards right now."

He turned to Cleves and said, "Hey. Mate, what prey did you discover?"

Cleves looked into the faint crimson waters and said, "A murloc."

Murloc? That's a Beyonder creature! Even though it's of the lowest grade, it's still quite difficult for ordinary people to deal with them. They would need at least five to six people and four to five spears to have a chance… That's right, the scales on a murloc's body are very hard. Revolvers can only deal a little damage. They need to have a rifle… Klein raised his eyebrows and asked, "What do you plan on doing? And how are you sure it's a murloc?"

Cleves pointed to the edge of the ship and said, "There are traces of its body's mucus here. One to two hours ago, it tried to climb onto the ship to attack the passengers, but the deck was still bustling with activity and there were lots of sailors and crew."

Klein took a few steps forward and saw that there were some traces of green corrosion on the side of the ship.

He recalled the information he had come into contact with in Tingen City, and it coincided with the content in the books. He asked with great interest, "Why must it be one, and not a group?"

He remembered that murlocs had a tendency to live together.

"If it's a group, then they'll directly destroy the ship's hull and let everyone sink. Moreover, the area around this channel and the surrounding sea have already been cleared of murlocs. The Church of Storms really enjoy hunting them," Cleves solemnly explained.

That's because murlocs are probably one of the main ingredients of the Sequence 9 Sailor potion… Klein stroked the revolver in his pocket and asked with a smile, "Are you confident?"

Cleves didn't directly answer him and instead opened a paper bag beside him. Inside the bag were some pig organs still stained with blood. This was the source of the smell of blood that Klein noticed.

"All murlocs like this kind of food and are unable to resist its allure. Of course, these monsters love human organs the most, so in many sea legends, it's emphasized to prepare some pig or beef organs from the ship's kitchen or canned organs," Cleves said as he sprinkled some granules. "Pepper granules can cause the murlocs to feel the excitement of smoking marijuana and lose some of their sense of balance. This can last for about a minute, and after that, the murlocs will be exhausted after the high state of excitement has subsided."

He then took out a wooden box from his clothes and placed the dark green paste on the tip of the trident, dagger, and short knife.

"The mint cream that's popular in Pritz Harbor is a unique sweetener for humans, but in the eyes of the murlocs, it's a deadly blood toxin.

"In addition, I borrowed two rifles from the sailors. I got an agreement to not disturb this area for twenty minutes, and I spent a sizable sum of money. However, as long as I can successfully kill a murloc, then I'll be able to reap ten, twenty, or even thirty times the cost."

As expected of an experienced adventurer, he's exceptionally aware about the weaknesses and problems of his prey… Listening to him speak, I feel like they have a chance of successfully hunting the murloc, even if they aren't Beyonders… In the face of traps and firearms, Low-Sequence Beyonders really aren't much stronger than the average person… It's not like there are no Low-Sequence Beyonders who die in gang wars… However, murlocs are creatures that seem to wear full-body armor. It's not easy to kill them. They would be injured, but it's not like they can't escape… Klein curiously asked, "You seem to have killed quite a number of murlocs?"

"Understanding the characteristics of common sea monsters is a prerequisite for an adventurer's survival." Cleves didn't show the joy of being praised as he remained calm and silent.

As they conversed, the girl, Donna, and the boy, Denton, squatted in the shadows and listened with relish. They found all of this to be the most interesting thing in the world.

Yes, I also need to brush up on my studies in this area… Klein smiled and said, "So that's how it is. I didn't disturb you, did I?"

Cleves pierced a portion of organs on a rod and said with a deep voice, "If you want to participate, take care of Donna and Denton so that Cecile won't be distracted."

"Sure." Klein, who wanted to watch from the sidelines, smiled and agreed.

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CHAPTER 494
A BITE OF MURLOC

The red moon hung high in the sky as Klein walked over to Donna and Denton and squatted down beside them.

Cecile, the female comrade of Cleves, let out a sigh of relief. She picked up the rifle on the deck, bent down, and quickly walked in another direction. She opened up a distance of about ten meters from the peppered pig's organs.

"Uncle, is it starting?…" The mischievous, freckled teenage girl, Donna, suddenly felt a little nervous. However, her face was filled with curiosity and anticipation.

Klein raised his left index finger to his mouth, motioning for the two young ones to be quiet.

At times like this, he couldn't help but thank Roselle. It was because of the efforts of this transmigration senior that some of his habitual gestures had become common body language in the Northern Continent, so it wouldn't lead to misunderstandings.

It was said that in the early part of the Fifth Epoch, this "don't talk" gesture was an insult in Loen. But in certain parts of the Southern Continent, it means "kiss me"…Klein's mind was a little distracted for a moment.

Donna and Denton didn't dare to say anything else. They just squatted there quietly, watching with rapt attention as Cleves prepared for the battle.

The former adventurer picked up a rod and threw the thread with some pig organs hanging from it over the side of the ship.

With a splash, the bait entered the water.

Calmly dispersing the remaining organs, Cleves wielded his weapon and retreated, step by step, to hide in the shadows opposite Cecile. The two of them formed an angle of about 60 degrees to the side of the ship where the rod was being supported.

Leaning his trident and other weapons, he raised his rifle and tried to take in the feeling of aiming.

The deck had completely quietened down, leaving only the operating sound of the steam engine and the crashing of waves against the ship.

As the minutes ticked by, Donna and Denton couldn't help but switch from squatting to sitting, with their backs against the planks of the cabin, trying to soothe the paralysis in their legs.

At that moment, they saw the rod on the side of the boat sink a little.

The muffled sound of friction rapidly grew closer and closer. Suddenly, a figure jumped onto the deck.

It was a monster bathed in crimson moonlight. Its entire body was covered in dark green scales, and there was a green slime flowing around it.

It didn't have much in common with humans. It was like a giant fish that had grown four strong limbs, and there was obvious webbing in the cracks of its limbs.

The murloc was more than 1.9 meters tall, with round eyes and gills on its cheeks. It looked like demons from legends, making Donna cover her mouth to prevent herself from screaming.

At the same time, she covered the mouth of her brother, Denton, as well.

Good thinking… Klein smiled to himself as he carefully examined the murloc.

Unlike the Sailor Rampager he had seen before, real murlocs didn't have human-like brains. They were pure monsters.

The murloc vigilantly scanned the surroundings before squatting down. It picked up the scattered pig organs, quickly stuffed them into its mouth, and produced clear chewing sounds.

The light in its mainly white eyes gradually faded, as if it had fallen into a dream.

It's of low intellect… Klein shook his head and made his judgment.

*Bang! *

Cleves pulled the trigger, and a bullet flew out from the rifle. It instantly struck the murloc's chest, causing its scales to shatter and blood to splatter.

"Wa!" The merman let out a cry which sounded like a child, and it threw itself at Cleves, who was hidden in the shadows. It was as fast as a steam train.

At this moment, Cecile, who was in another position, opened fire as well.

*Bang! *

The bullet from the rifle struck the murloc's ribs, causing many scales to scatter and the tall figure to stagger.

The murloc, who had eaten the pepper granules, became visibly sluggish. It stopped, unsure of which enemy to attack first.

And this gave Cleves and Cecile a chance to calmly reload.

They took aim again and pulled their triggers.

Bang! Bang!

The sprays of blood bloomed in succession, the pain caused the murloc's eyes to regain its lucidity.

It flipped and pounced, dodging the follow-up shots, and closed in on Cleves as if it were unhurt.

Cleves methodically put down the rifle in his hand and picked up the trident that was leaning to his side.

Instead of dodging, he leaped forward and rolled to the side of the murloc. The trident in his hand ruthlessly and accurately pierced into the area where the scales on the side of his prey were shattered.

The murloc spun around abruptly, bringing with it a gust of wind. It forcefully threw the trident along with Cleves out, causing the former adventurer to crash onto the deck.

The murloc shook its head, as though sensing an intense discomfort. It didn't attack Cleves and Cecile again, but instead, took large strides to the side of the ship in an attempt to jump into the sea.

*Bang! *

Cecile's bullet hit it again, creating blood to blossom again, but it still didn't make it become immobile.

With two steps, the murloc reached a suitable spot. It bent its knees and prepared to jump up.

However, its body was too weak to exert its full strength. The distance it had jumped was obviously not enough, so it could only land on the inner side of the ship.

*Bang! *

The murloc bore the brunt of the damage and tried to flip over the side of the ship.

Seeing it almost escaping, Klein took out his revolver.

Just then, a loud bang came from another direction!

The murloc's left eye turned into a bloody hole, and one could vaguely see a pale gelatinous substance squirming inside.

It wasn't dead yet. It lay on the floor of the deck, trying its best to crawl and get up again.

After a few seconds, the poison took effect and it twitched to its death.

Klein traced the sound and saw a middle-aged man step out of the shadows on the other side of the cabin.

The middle-aged man was wearing a thick dark red coat and white slacks. He was wearing the standard ship-shaped hat of this era.

He was holding an iron-colored musket that was a relic of the times as white smoke billowed out of its thick black muzzle.

Klein had heard the attendant introduce the man before, and he knew the man. He was the captain of the White Agate, Elland Kag.

With obvious wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, his forehead, and the corners of his mouth, Elland walked towards Cleves and said with a smile, "As a captain, I must ensure that no accidents happen.

"Forgive me for watching by the side all this time."

Cleves had already stood up. He didn't betray his emotions.

"This is your ship.

"According to convention, you have the right to share in the spoils."

Elland turned his head to look at Klein and others and said with a smile, "The next resupply of water and food is in two days time. You'll have to think of a way to preserve the murloc's corpse.

"How about this, sell it to me at a cheaper price; the difference is the reward I deserve."

"This is the best solution." Cleves and Cecile exchanged glances and agreed to Elland's request. "For 130 pounds, it's all yours."

The murloc Beyonder ingredient has a market price of 150 to 200 pounds. Considering the other parts with spirituality, 130 pounds is indeed cheap… However, this is the only thing Cleves and Cecile can do. This is Elland's ship, and he had a large group of armed sailors and crew to help him. If the negotiations break down, they could sink everyone here into the sea within minutes… Of course, that's under the premise that I don't involve myself… Yes, it can be seen that Cleves and Cecile aren't Beyonders, at least not Beyonders of the combat and shooting domains. As for Elland, I find it suspect… Klein stood up and listened to the deal.

"No, you seem to have misunderstood something. I'm not threatening you. 150 pounds. That's a fair price." Elland Kag called for a sailor and gave him the key to the safe.

"You are the 'Just Elland'?" Only then did Cecile seem to recall his title on the sea.

Elland laughed and said, "Yes."

At this moment, Donna and Denton, stunned by the intense battle and the living monster, jumped to their feet and ran over to the murloc in excitement and fear.

"Is… is it really dead?" Donna kicked the murloc's body with her toe, then she jumped away and hid behind her younger brother as if she were afraid it would revive.

"It really is a monster!" Denton took a deep breath and opened his eyes wide.

"There are many monsters at sea. Apart from having four limbs and being able to stand, murlocs have no similarities to humans." Elland smiled gently.

He squatted down and took out a knife, slicing the cheek beneath the murloc's eye, revealing white, tender skin that was tainted with some red.

"The most delicious part of a murloc's body is suitable for eating it raw." Elland carefully sliced a piece of flesh and handed it to Donna. "You remind me of my daughter. Unfortunately, she's grown up and has a family of her own."

"I-I don't dare to eat it…" Donna said, looking at the thin sliver of flesh held at the tip of the knife.

"Haha, which one of you wants to try?" Elland laughed and looked around.

After confirming that there were no warnings from his spiritual intuition, Klein nodded.

"I'm very curious."

Elland immediately handed him the knife.

"Give it a try. On land, even nobles may not necessarily have a chance to eat it.

"These murlocs are fish monsters. They can be understood as a mutated type of fish."

He was trying to dispel the siblings' fears.

Klein wanted to ask if there was any wasabi, soy sauce, or any other condiments, but seeing that the other party didn't mention it, he was afraid to appear ignorant.

He took the knife, bit into the bloody flesh, and swallowed it.

It was a feeling of flesh that instantly melted in his mouth. The taste of blood was very faint, giving it an appropriate salty taste. It perfectly set off the fresh and sweet taste of the meat.

Klein chewed twice, taking in the deliciousness of the tenderness and freshness of the fish meat. It was the first time in his life that he was experiencing something like that.

"Excellent." He wasn't stingy with his praises as he gave a thumbs up.

Donna watched the whole thing with curiosity, suddenly interested in the flesh on the murloc's cheek.

This overwhelmed her fear and disgust, and she suggested the idea of trying.

Elland fulfilled her request and smiled as he watched her tightly close her eyes as her face scrunched into a grimace as she bit into the meat.

Donna's expression gradually relaxed, and she quickly opened her eyes. She excitedly praised, "An indescribable delicacy!"

She spurred things into action as Denton, Cecile, and the others shared the little chunk of cheek meat. Eating it satisfied them, but it also made them dissatisfied. They were satisfied with the taste, but were dissatisfied with the quantity.

Seeing that Elland had eaten the last piece, Cleves pointed at the murloc's body and said, "The meat around the ribs is suitable for frying, while the belly meat should be roasted. The other parts taste bad."

"I share your thoughts," Elland said with a chuckle. "I'll have the chef prepare it immediately. On such a night, we should enjoy good food and wine together and exchange the legends at sea. It's a very enjoyable matter."

I'm looking forward to it… However, why did a perfectly fine hunt turn into a delicacy exchange… Klein swallowed his saliva.

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CHAPTER 495
LEGEND OF TREASURE

Above the deck, there was an extra layer of asbestos beneath the grill to prevent the coal sparks from being blown out by the wind and scorching the surface of the ship.

The fat cook, wearing an apron and a tall white hat invented by Roselle, used a fine brush to constantly apply a seasoning created from a secret recipe—basil, fennel, sea salt, pepper, and lemon juice—to the long, white strips of fish, and frequently flipped them over to ensure that both sides were evenly heated.

The flesh of the murloc's belly was fatty, dripping with drops of oil and causing the coal beneath the iron mesh to sizzle and flare up.

An enticing aroma began to fill the air, and Klein inhaled again and again.

In front of him was a round table and a chair. On top of the table was a unique looking bottle of wine. The wine was golden red in color and seemed slightly sticky as it swirled about.

"Sonia blood wine is brewed from the sugar-wood juice found in the surrounding areas of Golden Spring. It tastes like thin honey mixed with blood. It's sweet and smooth, but it's very easy to get drunk on. If you fancy any lady and want to treat her to a drink, you can consider this. It will make her drink more without realizing it. Haha, that's under the premise that you're able to handle the amount of alcohol she's drinking." Noticing Klein's scrutiny, Captain Elland Kag introduced in a half-joking manner.

As expected of a former boatswain, he's accomplished when it comes to self-deprecation… Klein sat down and maintained a cold attitude as he asked, "A qualified adventurer wouldn't indulge in alcohol."

Cleves, who was beside him, nodded.

"Only when they return home will adventurers allow themselves to drink."

"What a pity." Elland turned to look at Donna and Denton who were staring curiously at the blood wine. He laughed and said, "This isn't something that underaged children should experience."

"I've had it before, it tastes really good!" Donna retorted immediately. "It's just… It's just that I fell asleep without realizing it and slept an entire afternoon…"

"I remember that you drank two cups that time!" the little gentlemen, Denton, said enviously.

Elland didn't satisfy their cravings and instead ordered a cup of sweet iced tea for each of the siblings and casually explained, "There are a lot of Southerners on this ship."

Denton retracted his disappointed gaze and looked at the murloc which had its valuable materials taken away. He said rather innocently, "Actually… Actually, it's not that scary. It's just a bigger, uglier fish with four limbs!"

Donna shot a glance at her younger brother.

"Congratulations, you've finally recognized the essence of it."

She then looked eagerly at Cleves and Elland.

"Uncle, Uncle, are there many of these monsters in the sea?"

Murlocs didn't possess Beyonder powers which were beyond one's imagination. In the eyes of ordinary people, they were akin to ferocious beasts at sea or a living example of legendary monsters.

Elland chuckled and said, "No, in the main sea route and the surrounding seas, there are very few monsters like this. They've been cleared out a long time ago. You must be lucky enough to meet a murloc.

"Think about it, if I can often kill monsters worth 200 pounds or more, then I certainly wouldn't be the captain of a passenger ship. I'd organize my own hunting boat to chase down these gold pounds!"

That makes a lot of sense! Klein secretly cheered him on.

According to his observation, the Beyonder ingredient from a murloc was its bladder. That azure aqueous light made one feel like they were looking at a gem.

Cleves raised the black tea which a sailor had just delivered. He first smelled it before taking a sip.

"Only by leaving the main sea route and going deep into the ocean, which is often shrouded in fog or storms, will there be a good chance of encountering such monsters, but that would be very dangerous.

"Apart from scaly murlocs who can climb, there are also legends at sea of Nagas that have the upper body of a human while their bottom half is that of a snake. They have six arms and are very agile."

Elland continued on the topic.

"There are also giant octopuses which can spit out juices that can corrode a lot of people, terrifying sea monsters that can flip a boat with a gentle blow, mermaids with intoxicating songs that make one unwilling to leave, blue giant dragons that can produce lightning, giant birds with wings that can

cause hurricanes. Heh heh, I've never seen any of these before. They're all legends of the sea, and no one knows whether they're real or fake."

Mermaids… Klein's expression didn't change.

"Very interesting," Donna exclaimed, fascinated with a look of longing.

Denton looked around, and seeing that Klein hadn't spoken, he curiously asked, "Uncle, you're an adventurer too. Have you seen such monsters before?"

Klein was stunned for a moment and then gave a faint smile.

"Once. Back then, there were five of us, and we chanced upon one, a single murloc. After an intense fight, we finally finished it."

This was a real experience of his in Tingen City; it was also his first encounter with an official Beyonder who had lost control.

At that time, he and Old Neil had helped to eliminate a mutated Sailor at the request of Swain, the old owner of the Evil Dragon Bar.

Thinking of this, Klein felt nostalgic and wistful. The cold and sharp expression on his face couldn't help but soften significantly.

"Five people?" While asking, Donna secretly counted the number of people who had been involved in the battle.

1, 2, 3… She discovered that only three people had taken action to kill the murloc.

Without waiting for Klein's response, Elland said with a hint of surprise, "A chance encounter?"

"Yes," Klein answered frankly.

"Were there any casualties?" Elland pressed.

Klein shook his head.

"A few minor injuries"

"A chance encounter and you only took five people to finish a murloc… All of you are very powerful." Cleves gave his own evaluation.

His companion, Cecile, nodded to express her astonishment.

The battle that had happened just now was brief and quick, and the murloc seemed easy and vulnerable, but she and Cleves both knew very well that without the pre-prepared bait, the hallucinatory effects of the pepper granules and the subsequent fatigue, the murloc's fatal weakness of mint cream, and the two borrowed rifles, it was impossible to imagine how many people would die in order to kill a murloc.

"Indeed, very powerful." Elland looked thoughtfully at Klein.

It was a team formed of four Sequence 9s and a Sequence 8… Klein said with a half-smile and a half-sigh, "At that time, I was still very young, and I didn't even have any experience in combat. I was purely support."

"Uncle, you're still very young!" Donna nodded her head vigorously.

I like what you said… Klein keenly noticed that Captain Elland had relaxed a lot from what he had just said.

At this moment, several crew members had brought over a large ceramic plate. On top of it were pieces of meat that had been fried to a golden hue. The basil leaves were sprinkled with color, and a captivating fragrance assaulted their noses.

Elland raised his glass of Sonia blood wine and offered a toast.

"To a beautiful night. May the Storm be with us!"

"To a beautiful night!" Donna and Denton cheered and sipped their sweet iced tea.

Klein chose to clink glasses with a cup of black tea.

He forked a piece of meat from the murloc's ribs, finding it firm and without fat. However, after absorbing the vegetable oil, its flaw of being too dry was remedied. As he chewed, it emanated an limitlessly chewy consistency and fragrance.

It's really inferior to the cheek meat, but it's already good enough. It's better than all the fish I've eaten while in Backlund and Pritz Harbor… Klein praised in satisfaction.

Elland put down the knife and fork in his hands, took a sip of Sonia blood wine, and sighed at the topic.

"At sea, the greatest danger doesn't stem from the monsters but those pirates.

"They helm their ships, going wherever they please. No one can defend against them in advance."

"Uncle Captain, will we encounter pirates?" Denton asked with concern as he swallowed the fried fish.

Elland laughed.

"The route to the Rorsted Archipelago is the safest in the world, with colonial islands en route every two to three days, allowing us to dock. The route is also patrolled by ships from the Imperial Navy and the Church of Storms.

"Even if pirates come wandering here, they wouldn't do anything too excessive. After seeing our cannons, they would at most extort some compensation."

Seeing that the two underaged children had calmed down, Elland added, "But from the south of the Rorsted Archipelago, or as we continue east, we'll have to rely on the Lord's blessing.

"Many pirates are active in these areas, playing hide and seek with the ships of the navy and Church. If we're lucky, we'll be able to reach the Southern Continent and every destination very smoothly. But if we aren't lucky, we'll encounter some relatively powerful pirates, including the fleet of the Seven Pirate Admirals and even the Four Kings.

"However, you don't have to be too worried. Ever since Nast became the King of the Five Seas and enacted the rules of sea passage, most pirates will only rob you clean of your wealth, without doing anything too overboard.

"Around this area, we're most afraid of encountering the captain of the Black Tulip, Admiral Hell Ludwell. He'll get his subordinates to kill everyone on board, throwing the innocents into hell. Next would be Admiral of Blood Senor. He loves blood, and he allows his subordinates to partake in heinous acts. Many girls have suffered under them before being sold to different islands…”

Donna trembled as she subconsciously changed the topic.

"I heard that there are a lot of treasures at sea!"

"There are legends of treasures, but most of them are fake." Elland glanced at Cleves and said, "There are six stories which are the most famous. Ranked first is the Death's Key. Rumor has it that at the end of the Fourth Epoch, Death, who had caused the Pale Disaster, was attacked by the seven gods and ended up perishing. 'He' attempted to return to the Southern Continent and created a raging stormy wave, an impassable barrier. It completely obstructed the sea route between the Northern and Southern

Continents. This is the origin legend of the Berserk Sea. However, 'He' eventually failed to return to the Southern Continent and ended up vanishing in the sea."

When he said this, Elland sighed with pangs of yearning.

"It's said that in some secret place in the Berserk Sea, the treasure left behind by Death is waiting for the person holding the specific key to find it and open it, but no one knows what the key looks like, or where it will appear.

"Ranked second is the Fountain of Unaging. It's deep in the Sonia Sea. Rumor has it that one of the four kings, King of Immortality, Agalito, had drunk the waters of the Fountain of Unaging."

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CHAPTER 496
THE PROMISING SEA

"Fountain of Unaging? Will you really gain eternal youth if you drink it?" Donna widened her eyes and asked curiously.

She didn't have any feelings of anticipation, because she was still young enough.

Elland didn't answer at once, and instead, he forked a piece of fried murloc rib meat, tore into it in two bites, and took a sip of Sonia wine.

*The sweet and smooth taste has completely nullified the cloyed taste of fried oil… *His eyes were half-closed, and he looked like a gourmet.

After pondering for a few seconds, he slowly answered Donna's question, "I don't know if there's a Fountain of Unaging, nor am I certain if the King of Immortality, Agalito, drank its waters. I only know one thing, and that is, that when I was very young, I heard the legend of this pirate king. It's just like how King of the Five Seas, Nast, seems to live forever."

"Their beards must be very long, extending beyond than their chests!" Denton gave his opinion.

"In fact, the King of the Five Seas, Nast, has a beard that only reaches below his neck. He sits on the deck, draped in a black splendid robe with silver ends. He wears a crown that's two times taller than his head and overlooks everything like a deity…" Elland's tone gradually lowered as though his memories had entered a quagmire, and he was unable to extricate himself.

"Uncle Captain, have you ever met the King of the Five Seas?" Donna asked excitedly.

This was the most legendary pirate. His name traveled through the sea, and even the children of the port cities knew his name.

Whole generations of people grew up listening to stories about him!

In a sense, many people view Nast as the true pirate king… I remember one of the conditions for advancement for Dark Emperor is to equate one's name with "emperor," entrenching it deep in the hearts of the people… Is this an early or simplified version of an attempt? I wonder what Sequence the King of the Five Seas is at now… Although Klein was focused on sampling the murloc meat, his mind whirled as a result of the group's discussion.

Faced with Donna's question, Elland said with a sigh, "At that time, I was still very young and serving on the William V. Once, our fleet tried to cross the Strait of Calamity in the Berserk Sea and encountered the Dark Emperor's ship there.

"In those few minutes, everyone, including the fleet Captain, lost the will to fight. Fortunately, Nast didn't give the order to attack us."

"Very cool!" the boy Denton cheered, his eyes shining.

Elland didn't continue the topic. He smiled and said, "As for King of Immortality, Agalito, I've never met him in real life. I only know that his bounty notice depicts a pale middle-aged man. How pale? Let me give an example you can understand. It's like he's been dead for some time, a corpse which is just beginning to rot."

When Donna and Denton heard this analogy, they subconsciously looked at the badly mutilated murloc's corpse and involuntarily quivered their throats.

"Of course, the most important thing in a bounty notice isn't the looks. It's the bounty reward. In Loen alone, Agalito is worth 100,000 pounds. And his bounty is the lowest among the four kings." Elland diverted the topic and said, "Let's continue the stories about treasure. Ranked third is the inheritance of the Solomon Empire. In the Fourth Epoch, when that massive empire was dissolved and destroyed, the royalty brought treasures that even the gods would be jealous of onto a ship. They steered it deep into the Fog Sea, awaiting the opportunity to rebuild their dynasty. However, five hundred years passed, a thousand years passed, and fifteen hundred years passed, but it ultimately didn't appear."

"Rumor has it that the King of the Five Seas, Nast, inherited parts of the Solomon Empire's inheritance. No one knows if he's a descendant of the real Dark Emperor," Cecile added with interest.

"Fog Sea? Western shore of the Northern Continent?" Donna thought back to her geography.

"Right," Cleves responded simply.

West of the Northern Continent was the Fog Sea; to its east was the Sonia Sea, south was the Berserk Sea, and north was the North Sea. The east and west sides of the Southern Continent were similar to the Northern Continent, while south of it was the Polar Sea. Together, they formed the Five Seas.

The Loen Kingdom was backed by the Hornacis mountain range and the inland Midseashire. Its eastern face was the Sonia Sea, and it stretched south to Desi Bay. It occupied several of the excellent entrances to the Berserk Sea, but it didn't involve the Fog Sea.

"Is that so…" Donna didn't have much interest in the faraway treasure, so she switched focus and asked, "What about the fourth treasure?"

"It belongs to the last empire of the Fourth Epoch, Trunsoest. Rumor has it that they built a huge ship the size of a city, and they transferred all their

treasures onto it. Funny enough, their escape was of no use. Although the predetermined passengers and crew didn't fail to arrive at the port in time, none of them survived.

"However, that ship vanished by itself. Up to this day, people often claim to see a gigantic ship sail by them silently in a foggy night. It's been called the Specter Empire, and it appears across the Sonia Sea. Heh, this is the conclusion from all those stories." Elland looked up at the red moon hanging high in the sky as he said with a tone of mockery, without any disguise of his longing.

Perhaps we will see it pass us by tomorrow night, no—tonight! Donna thought with anticipation and excitement.

Klein finished up the rest of his food, drank his black tea, and listened with interest to what Elland had to say about the rest of the treasures.

"The fifth is the Lost City of Newins. Rumor has it that at the bottom of the Fog Sea, there's a civilization with intelligent creatures. Around that patch of sea, seafarers and adventurers often find special items which all point to the Newins of ancient times. However, the members of this civilization have yet to appear. It's like it has been lost to this world." Elland drank the remaining of his Sonia blood wine and said, "That is an inheritance left behind by a civilization. The magnitude of its wealth is absolutely unimaginable."

After pausing for two seconds, Elland put down his glass and laughed.

"In fact, the treasure I look forward to the most is one which has more accounts than legends, the Sunken Laurel. More than a century ago, it carried gold, jewelry, and various valuable items that the kingdom obtained from East Balam. As it steered away from the sea route, it sunk in an unknown area somewhere between the Berserk Sea and Sonia Sea. It hasn't been found to this day.

"It's said that the items onboard are worth millions of pounds!"

"Millions of pounds?" The number caused Donna to blurt out in astonishment.

As a merchant's daughter who had been educated for many years, she had a vague understanding as to what this number represented.

In Loen, a millionaire was a genuinely rich person, second only to the top noble families and tycoons!

Millions of pounds? As a member of the National Atmospheric Pollution Council, a major shareholder in the Coim Company, Mrs. Mary, who allowed me to join the Quelaag Club for free, is only worth a few hundred thousand pounds, and even so, she's rich enough even in the circle of aristocrats and merchants. She's a popular divorced lady, and there are even aristocratic children who proposed to her… Klein quickly found a target for comparison.

Elland sighed with a smile.

"If I can find the Sunken Laurel, then I don't have to be a captain anymore. I'll head to Backlund and become a philanthropist. I'll purchase land and donate to political parties and get a hereditary aristocratic title!"

I've heard Talim mention before that a baronet costs about 300,000 pounds and about 800,000 pounds for a baron… If you manage to get your hands on the treasure, the titles of viscount and even earl is something within the limits of imagination… Millions of pounds! Klein helped Elland perfect his plan.

"If it were me, I wouldn't do that. I'll buy a huge manor." Cecile also began to imagine her life after finding the treasure. "I want to hire many servants and helpers, plant large tracts of wheat, build vineyards, make wine for myself… Also, I want to have a room where I can sunbathe; have leisurely moving cows, sheep, and horses; and have bread from my own mill, just like a beautiful picturesque scene…"

Elland laughed when he heard that.

"Ma'am, do you know how much a manor like this is worth?"

"No, I don't." Cecile shook her head.

"It's only a few thousand pounds. If you find the Sunken Laurel, you can buy a thousand of those manors!" Elland used exact numbers to illustrate the value of the treasure.

A thousand manors? Cecile couldn't help but raise her cup and drink a mouthful of black tea.

Before this, she had known that several million pounds was a lot of money, but she hadn't expected it to be this much!

In order to alleviate the shock in her heart, she looked at Cleves and said, "Boss, if you find the Sunken Laurel, what do you plan on buying. No, what sort of life do you wish to have?"

Cleves fell silent for a moment before saying, "Return home. I'll hug my wife and children, telling them that I no longer need to go on an adventure out at sea again."

Not a bad guy… Klein nodded slightly.

Donna looked at him curiously.

"Uncle Adventurer, what about you?"

Klein replied expressionlessly, "Tell myself not to sleep anymore. Hurry up and wake up."

Pfft… Donna spat out the sweet iced tea she'd just drunk, but fortunately, the fried fish on the table had already been eaten.

At this moment, Klein sighed inwardly.

Even though I know it's basically impossible to find the treasure; otherwise, the various churches would've already done it with all the powerhouses they have. But when discussing such topics, I couldn't help but get excited. This is the charm of treasure! Even if it was just a legend, it can attract many adventurers!

Donna wiped her mouth and sat down like a lady, as though she wasn't the one who had lost her composure.

The little boy, Denton, asked, still eager for more, "Are there any other legends of treasure?"

Elland looked at Cleves, indicating that he should answer.

Cleves calmly drank a mouthful of black tea and said in a deep voice, "There are countless treasures at sea. The hidden lands of the elves, the missing pirate ships in the depths of the fog, the underwater city sealed with powerful monsters, the last secret trove of Emperor Roselle, and so on."

Ah? The Emperor had already reached the level of leaving treasures and legends for others… If it's true, would there be Cards of Blasphemy in it? How many would there be? The legend of the Key of Death might help Mr. Azik regain more of his memories… Klein thought with curiosity and anticipation.

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CHAPTER 497
THE WALL OF REWARDS

After the talk about the legends of treasures that had inspired generations of adventurers to go to sea came to an end, the cook had also finished roasting the flesh of the murloc's belly.

They were white after being cooked, charred a little black, and covered with tiny brown particles that glistened with a moist, oily glow.

The repeated smearing of seasonings had already seeped into the texture of the meat, effusing it with a tantalizing visual effect.

"Desi grilled fish, it's different from how you usually eat it." Elland pointed at the white porcelain plate the cook lowered.

Donna held her fork and knife and eagerly said, "I love honey-roasted fish!

"But this is also very appetizing."

Honey-roasted fish… How much honey would that take… If I have a chance to try it, the taste should be pretty good… Klein allowed his imagination to run wild.

With a chef, there was no need for them to serve themselves. They could only look on expectantly as pieces of fish were sliced, placed on different plates, and served in front of them.

Klein was very serious when it came to tasting delicacies, so he was in no hurry to deal with the fish. Instead, he took a sip of black tea and used the slightly sour liquid to clear his mouth of any remaining flavors.

After doing all of this, he forked a piece of fish and stuffed it into his mouth.

In a split-second, he felt the slightly stimulating flavors of fennel, basil, and other spices. They were sufficient enough to help him open up one taste bud after another.

Immediately after, the delicious juices of the meat, the slightly astringent taste of the sea salt and the refreshing, sour, and sweet taste of lemon all burst out at the same time, filling his oral cavity and making his mouth water.

As he chewed, the last bit of the fish meat's stubbornness was broken off one by one after having its fat roasted out of it, fully presenting the splendor of the meat, as well as its faint sweetness.

Swallowing the fish in his mouth, Klein recalled a delicacy program he had watched in his previous life and chose the evaluation line that matched what he just felt: "The layered flavors are very clear, excellent!"

"Haha, your tone and words make you sound like a gourmet," Elland joked.

Donna waved her fork and echoed, "Uncle, perhaps you should write a column in the newspaper about different restaurants and different cuisines."

Eh, why didn't I think of this idea… This is a good job that can earn me money, as well as allowing me to taste delicacies! The only problem is that an obese man can't be a flexible clown… Use the great art of spewing vomit? What a waste of food! Klein seriously considered Donna's suggestion.

"To a beautiful night!"

When there was very little food left, Elland poured himself some more of the Sonia blood wine and raised his glass with a ruddy face.

Klein and the others echoed in similarly good moods, "To a beautiful night."

They drank the rest of the liquids from their glasses and watched the waiter clear the table and clean the deck.

They talked for a while more amidst the cold wind, talking about the mermaids that Donna was most interested in.

Cleves told the young lady that, in some legends, mermaids were also called Sirens, and they used their songs to confuse humans not for entertainment but for hunting. Aside from the possibility of encountering these creatures on the sea route from the Gargas Archipelago to the depths of the Sonia Sea, there was a certain chance of discovering it in dangerous seas that haven't been explored by humans. However, all of this stemmed from the drunken boasting of certain pirates, and they all avoided the question of how they escaped from the mermaids' songs, which made it highly suspicious.

No matter what, this at least points me in a possible direction… Klein took note of what they had discussed.

"Donna, Denton, it's time to go back. You'll have to get up early tomorrow and have breakfast with your parents." Cecile looked at the moon's position.

"Fine." Donna stood up reluctantly.

Denton hurriedly asked, "D-do I have a chance at becoming an adventurer?"

His mind had been captivated by the previous hunt and the legends.

Cleves walked to his side, patted his shoulder, and said, "Before you ask this question, you need at least five years of combat training and studying. I think your father will hire a good tutor for you."

"Yeah!" Denton's eyes lit up, and he nodded vigorously.

After five years, the adult you probably won't want to be an adventurer who can find himself buried at the bottom of the sea at any time… Cleves's handling of the situation was very shrewd. He didn't immediately refuse him, but rather he gave him hope and let time wash away his interest. This prevents the child from becoming suddenly rebellious… Regardless, mastering a fighting technique is always beneficial for anyone… Klein put his hands in his pockets and thought with appreciation.

On the way back to the interior of the cabin, Cleves handed two five-pound notes to Klein.

"Your payment."

He had just received 150 pounds from Elland's purchase of the whole murloc.

"I didn't do anything," Klein instinctively refused.

Cleves glanced at him with his pale blue eyes and said in a low voice, "You freed up Cecile and took good care of the children."

Took good care of the children? Klein was somewhat amused, but he finally took the two bills and drew a triangle on his chest.

"You're more generous than I thought. Thank you."

He stopped declining because he suddenly figured out something. If he hadn't accepted the ten pounds, then in the eyes of a veteran adventurer like Cleves, it would appear as though he was dissatisfied with the price and was attempting to get more, making it possible that he would attack them at any time. Among self-proclaimed adventurers, there was definitely no lack of greedy madmen!

Seeing Gehrman Sparrow pocket the money, Cleves looked away and said flatly, "This is a rule of the sea."

Without another word, he followed Cecile, Donna, and company into the cabin.

If I could get such rewards with every single mission and job of this difficulty, then I would've long made a fortune with my job as a private detective… Klein gave a self-deprecating laugh and turned his head to look at the red moon hanging high in the sky.

It still shone quietly and gently in the night.

Legends of the sea, different monsters… I've finally found the slight feeling of being an adventurer. Klein turned around and walked to the edge of the ship. Bathing in the crimson veil, he admired the waves that were growing darker. Gradually, his mood settled as he walked out bit by bit from the gloom of Backlund's Great Smog.

The cold, damp wind slapped his face, and the vast, endless ocean caught his eye, opening up his heart.

For a moment, Klein felt the urge to sing, but when he opened his mouth, he found that he couldn't remember the corresponding modern verses.

I can't just end up saying, "Oh sea, you're all water"…The Emperor's Savant Sequence is really well suited to doing such things. When I have the time, I should read through his poems so as to not look like illiterate… Klein lampooned as he looked at the red moon and the ocean before sighing.

"What a beautiful night."

…

After an accidental episode of getting lost, the exploratory team returned to the City of Silver.

Looking at the wall's cracks filled with weeds, Derrick found himself in a trance, as if he had been gone for many years.

Diagonally behind him, Demon Hunter Colin's eyes suddenly wore a lost look as he raised his hand to press on his right temple.

The rest of the team members were filled with joy and relief from the bottom of their hearts.

After a difficult exploration, having a home waiting for them was the happiest thing in their hearts.

Collin's gaze returned to normal as he turned his head to the side and looked diagonally ahead.

…

Backlund, the White family.

After some thought, the confident Emlyn came up to his parents and asked, "If I wanted to delve into the history of us Sanguine, who would I look for?"

If I were to ask about the City of Silver directly, it's very likely that I'll be exposed for being problematic. Although I'm not afraid and very calm, for the Ancestor and in order to save the entire Sanguine race, I have no choice but to hide it… I've always been interested in the history of Sanguine. I've collected a lot of information, and Father and Mother know that, so I wouldn't be suspected in any way… This excuse is perfect! Emlyn praised himself inwardly.

He resembled his father to a certain extent. He wore gold-rimmed glasses that made him look very professional.

The gentleman, who had gotten his doctorate in medicine, put down the thick "Anatomy" book in his hands, nudged his glasses, and said, "No one

in Backlund knows more than Lord Nibbs."

…If I dared to seek Lord Nibbs, I would've long done so… Emlyn thought of Mr. Fool's description of him being a messiah, that had to bear the burden of a secret while being misunderstood, as he pressed with a solemn expression, "Aside from Lord Nibbs?

"He's sleeping underground, so it's not convenient for him to be disturbed."

Emlyn's father pulled up the collar of his thick cotton pajamas and thought for a moment.

"Waymandy. He always thinks of himself as a historian."

Emlyn heaved a sigh of relief and smiled.

"I wish to visit him."

…

Woo!

The whistle sounded and the White Agate sailed into Damir Harbor.

It would replenish fresh food and water on the colonial island and set sail again the next morning.

After hunting the murloc, Klein spent the next two days of what could be described as a leisurely or boring life. He was completely bored by the scenery of the sea, and he decided to head to the harbor's bar to look around that very night, hoping to get more information on mermaids and inspiration for acting.

If I were to come across a pirate whose hands are stained with blood onshore, I wouldn't mind teaching him a lesson. There are still souls waiting to be released from Creeping Hunger… Klein's forehead sweated as

he equipped himself with all his mystical items as he left his cabin before heading down to the harbor.

During this process, he met Donna, Cleves, and the others. They seemed to be heading over to a port restaurant to taste Damir's most famous cured meat.

Donna and Denton greeted the adventurer, whom they had just gotten to know, without their parents noticing, and seemed curious as to where he was going.

Klein smiled back, pulled up his collar, and, following the directions of the sign, found the nearest bar.

Flying Fish & Wine… Klein looked at the signboard and saw that the outside of the bar was plastered with bounty notices.

Among them were the 800,000 pounds belonging to the King of the Five Seas, and more than a hundred pounds for the common pirate captain. This formed a unique landscape that ranged from the highest to the lowest.

It's all money… Klein stood on the spot and looked at it for a long time.

He withdrew his gaze, pushed open the door, and entered the bar, only to find that it was abnormally quiet. It didn't have the din that such places came equipped with.

What happened? Klein looked around and saw Captain Elland, in a dark red coat, sitting at the bar, as well as two large men in the middle of the room, facing each other.

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CHAPTER 498
PERSONA

The standoff was between a brawny man in a blue white-striped shirt, a symbol of the navy. Despite the weather being at near zero temperatures, he had his arms bare.

He held a dagger against the throat of the man opposite him, but his glabella was being pointed at by an ancient musket, one which could've been placed in a museum.

The musket's owner was also more than 1.8 meters tall, with strong muscles and an oily face. He had shaved his hair, and with a sea eagle tattoo, he cursed, "Dogsh*t Navy sailor!

"No one in Damir Harbor would dare slander me as a pirate's informant!"

The Navy sailor didn't yield to him, and both sides fully illustrated the rich profanities of the sea.

Klein observed for a few seconds, then he walked around the edge to Captain Elland, who had a straight sword at his waist and a hidden musket on his body. He asked in a calm and casual manner, "What happened?"

"A quarrel between two drunkards. In Damir Harbor and in the surrounding waters, there's always been such rumors that Sea Eagle Logan is in service of the master of the Black Tulip. The Navy sailor had mentioned this a moment ago, and Sea Eagle just happened to hear that."

The master of the Black Tulip? Isn't that Admiral Hell Ludwell? Klein turned and sat down on the high stool in front of the bar counter. He tapped

the wooden countertop.

"One glass of Southville beer."

"Six pence." A bronze-skinned bartender with pearly-white teeth wiped the cups as he said with zero passion.

When it comes to continental specialties, the prices are much higher than Backlund and Tingen.… Klein fished out a handful of copper pence, counted six pence and gave it to him.

At this moment, Logan and the Navy sailor were stopped by the bar's bouncer. After they each spoke harshly to each other, they retreated to different corners.

Perhaps it was due to him losing his dignity, the Navy sailor hurriedly left after about ten seconds. The atmosphere in the bar became lively once again.

"Want to play some cards?" Captain Elland pointed to the stairs by the side of the bar.

"No." Klein's main purpose for coming was to gather information.

Elland subconsciously wanted to pat him on the shoulder, but his cold and sharp demeanor stopped him. He could only pull back his hand and pretend to adjust his dark red coat and remind him, "Don't get the women here."

Klein nodded, picked up the glass of Southville beer, and took a swig.

"Also, don't trust anyone here. Only a small portion of what they say is true." Elland carried his Lanti Proof and stepped onto the stairs that led to the second floor.

Klein turned his head to glance at him and asked without a change in expression, "Including you?"

“…Perhaps." Elland was taken aback at first before he laughed out loud. "At least my reminder just now was real. Oh, and me being a man is true as well!"

Not necessarily… There's a potion called Witch in this world… Klein looked away, drinking slowly and listening to the surrounding drinkers boasting.

Two or three minutes later, a short, thin man sat down next to Klein with his drink.

"Mate, you look like an adventurer." He tilted his head and smiled.

The man who greeted him had black hair, blue eyes, and aged facial features. His temperament was rather wretched.

"You could say that," Klein replied coldly.

"I can tell you're a hunter, a hunter that chases after bounties and riches." The short man looked around and lowered his head, suppressing his voice while he said, "Have you heard of the Specter Empire?"

I've heard of Amway, and I've also heard of the Father in Heaven and the Messiah being sealed at the bottom of the sea… Using the power of Faceless, Klein sent out a signal not to approach him.

"Yes, a huge, ancient ghost ship full of treasures."

"We have clues to it!" the short man said in an infectious tone. "We found some information about where it will appear next! We don't want the pirates or the Navy to benefit from it, and we don't want to be robbed of our wealth, so we've decided to hire our own armed merchant ships to wait in that area, which would probably cost about 1,000 pounds. I've already found 15 companions and raised 720 pounds. Are you interested in participating?"

Without waiting for Klein to speak, he fumbled for a stack of brownish-yellow letters.

"I know you won't believe it so easily. In fact, no one will, but after the fifteen friends who read through this information, all of them decided to join in on our plan."

…Do I have a such a gullible face? Or would any bumpkin end up in this situation without slipping away from this sort of thing? While Klein was considering whether to appraise the letters, from the corner of his eye, he saw that Sea Eagle Logan, who was previously squabbling, was walking towards him.

"Woody, you're trying to scam someone again! You damn sewer rat!" Logan picked up the short man and threw him into the open space in the middle of the bar, where he landed on the ground, sprawling.

The muscular man, with the bluish-green tattoo on his head, sat in the same position as Woody and guffawed.

"Sorry, these are the rats of our Damir Harbor. They always do things that ruin our reputation.

"In fact, we're all very friendly. If you have anything you want to ask about, don't hesitate to ask me.

"Heh heh, don't believe what they say about me. I'm an upright person, and I have nothing to do with Admiral Hell!"

The more you emphasize that, the more suspicious it becomes… Klein's expression didn't change as he calmly said, "I want to know the latest rumors."

"No problem." Sea Eagle Logan slammed the bar top and said to the bartender, "Give me a plate of special cured meat. I'll be treating this mate to our most famous delicacy in Damir."

The bartender, while still maintaining his cold expression, pushed open the door and entered the kitchen. Soon, he brought out a plate of red and white, finely cut cured meat.

"Five pounds." He didn't look at Sea Eagle Logan, and he instead looked straight at Klein.

"Five pounds." Sea Eagle Logan turned his head to the side, smiling warmly as he raised his arm to show his muscles. "Everyone just heard it. In order to thank me, you offered to treat me to some special cured meat.

For a moment, Klein didn't realize what had happened. It was only when the bartender urged him a second time that he realized he was being blackmailed. Furthermore, their scam was rather well-planned.

First they used an easily seen through farce to let Sea Eagle Logan appear, thereby winning a good impression with the target, then, with the excuse of treating the target, order an especially expensive special cured meat, and then finally, he goes back on his word and turns matters upside down and forcing a sale… It's no wonder that when Rat Woody was thrown out, those drunkards didn't make a sound… They were all afraid of this Logan whose rumored to be in the service of Admiral Hell… How should I deal with this? My present persona is Gehrman Sparrow, a somewhat crazy adventurer and bounty hunter… Klein raised his cup and drank a mouthful of the rich malt-flavored beer and said with his usual tone, "Why don't you just rob me?"

"Why don't I just rob you?" Logan was a little stunned by the question.

Soon after, he saw a fist expanding before his face.

Thump!

Klein's left fist landed on Sea Eagle Logan's chin, knocking him backwards toward the bar counter.

With a push of his right palm, Klein nimbly left his chair and approached Logan's falling body.

His legs tensed, and his knees jerked upward, slamming into Logan's lower abdomen.

Pfft! Logan threw back his head, his eyes bulging while his mouth hung half open.

Klein drew his gun, shoved the revolver into the man's mouth, and pulled the hammer back.

"I… I am…” Logan shouted indistinctly.

Klein looked him in the eye, pulled out his revolver, and swung it, striking the side of Logan's face with the butt of the gun.

Logan's teeth fell out one after another, and his mouth was stained with blood.

Faced with such a heavy blow and a pain that exceeded his limits, his eyes rolled back, and he fainted.

Klein propped him up and pulled a handful of loose bills and coins out of his pocket.

Since he estimated that there wasn't more than five pounds with just a glance, Klein threw them on the bar and calmly said, "Keep the change."

The bartender's bronze face turned slightly pale as he shouted in panic, "My boss is White Shark!"

Without looking at him, Klein released his hand and allowed Sea Eagle Logan to fall to the ground. Then he sat down again, forked up a piece of cured meat, and stuffed it in his mouth to taste it. He found it rather unique

as the flavors of the condiments spread out in wisps, scratching at his belly and throat.

After eating two pieces, he looked up and asked, "Does your boss know that you're colluding with Sea Eagle?"

"No, he… No…” the bartender mumbled an answer.

Seeing that Klein had no intention of continuing his attacks and had paid the bill so quickly, the bouncers who had gathered nearby silently retreated.

Klein took a sip of his wine, glanced at Sea Eagle Logan on the ground, and calmly said to the bartender, "He's Ludwell's informant. How much is his bounty worth?"

"No, he's not." The bartender shook his head and said, "This is just something he says about himself—the information he spread himself. That Navy sailor from before was hired by him! That's the only way to make everyone here afraid of him…”

Upon hearing this answer, the drinkers at the bar all put down their glasses in surprise. Some of the drunkards even staggered over to Logan and spat in his face.

Pui! Pui! Pui! Many drinkers followed suit.

Klein lowered his head again and said while eating the special cured meat, "Tell me about the recent rumors."

The bartender breathed a sigh of relief as he wiped his glass and gave an intermittent account of the rumors in the past two months. Some of them were what Klein had heard before, and there were also things he just learned.

The Imperial Navy's ironclad warship, Pritz, had destroyed a passing pirate crew during routine training… Panic over the behemoth's cannons has

begun to spread among the small and medium-sized pirate powers… Some of them even wished to take advantage of the ironclad warship fleet's inchoate form to madly commit crimes before withdrawing from this trade with a sum of money… The sea wouldn't be peaceful for the next six months to a year… Admiral of Blood Senor and Rear Admiral Dusk Bulatov Ioan had a conflict in the southern waters of Sonia Island, and each of them lost two ships in the massive skirmish… Klein listened without asking questions, and he gradually filled his stomach.

Seeing that the plate containing the special cured meat had been emptied and having finished the rest of his beer, he slowly stood up.

"Remember today's lesson." Klein handed the plate to the bartender.

The bartender was about to reach out when the hair at the back of his head was grabbed.

*Bang! *

Klein shoved him down hard, knocking the bartender's head against the bar top, sending splinters flying and blood gushing. The customers all tried to avoid the impact, and the bouncers rushed over quickly.

After doing all of this, Klein clapped his hands and picked up his own glass, trying to pour the rest of the beer onto the bartender's head.

One drop, two drops, three drops…

Klein silently gave up. He turned around and bent down, grabbed Sea Eagle Logan, and threw him to the bouncers who were rushing over.

Taking advantage of the moment when the bouncers were dodging and the bar being in chaos, Klein quickly ran, agilely circling around them, and easily left Flying Fish & Wine.

He pushed down his hat and quickly proceeded forward, turning towards a neighboring street.

After continuously changing directions, he suddenly slowed down his pace, and a gold coin appeared in his hand.

The gold coin kept weaving around in his fingers as if it was scouting something.

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CHAPTER 499
SOLICITATION

Ding!

The gold coin quietly flipped up, tumbled down, and firmly lay in the palm of Klein's hand.

Lowering his head to glance if it was heads or tails, Klein spun his heel and smoothly turned into a quiet, dark alley.

The wind by the sea was cold and strong, and it caused a convection in the area, propelling his coat up without him realizing it and causing his half top hat to almost fall off.

Suddenly, Klein stopped, turned around, and said in a deep voice, "Come out."

His eyes were sharp as he stared at the shadow around the corner.

After four or five seconds of silence, a figure emerged from the shadows. He chuckled and said, "Very sharp."

It was a man in a black cloak, approximately thirty years of age, and his eyebrows were charred yellow while his dark blue eyes were bright. His face wasn't too chiseled, as though he was from the area south of Intis, Lenburg, and Segar.

As soon as he saw him, a picture flashed in Klein's mind.

As he entered the Flying Fish & Wine, he had professionally looked around for anyone he needed to pay attention to.

The answer at the time was no. The man had been drinking like a sailor and watching curiously from the side. He was no different from the other guests, and his appearance wasn't distinctive, but his black cloak had left a certain impression on Klein, allowing him to recognize the person who tailed him in an instant.

"What do you want?" Klein, who was maintaining his persona, bent down slightly, like a huge feline ready to pounce.

The man in the black cloak laughed once again.

"The fighting technique and handling method that you displayed just now was very consistent with my taste. I chased after you to ask if you're interested in joining us

"Although that guy named Logan was indeed pretending to be an informant of Ludwell, White Shark Hamilton does have connections with many pirates. He's a character with a shady background, so he'll definitely take your act of beating up one of his men at the bar to heart. There will definitely be problems for you in the future, and I can help you resolve this problem.

"You're an adventurer, so it's necessary for you to have dreams of treasure. As for us, we're people who banded together in a bid to seek treasure such as the Specter Empire, Solomon's inheritance, the secret of the Fountain of Unaging, the Death's Key, the Sunken Laurel, and Roselle's Treasure while traveling the Five Seas. Today, although we haven't accomplished any of our main goals, we've found many missing pirate ships. Heh heh, what I said does sound like what that rat had said, right?"

He cleared his throat and said, "Frankly speaking, we're a band of pirates formed from a group of adventurers, but we only plunder merchant and passenger ships when we're especially poor, and we don't harm the

innocent. Our main focus is on finding treasures, and we often reap harvests. And I kid you not, I once slept on a bed formed of gold coins. If we run into any other pirate ships, just showing them our prowess wins us some compensation.

"By the way, our Captain has decreed that before we recruit new people, we have to explain our creed and remuneration."

Creed? Your captain is a little interesting… Klein deliberately softened his tension to see if the enemy would take the opportunity to attack.

The black-cloaked man smiled in a relaxed manner.

"What I said previously was our creed, and now, let me talk about the remuneration."

This fellow is quite confident… Although he wasn't a Spectator, Klein could tell that he was very confident and that he was completely unfazed by the scene in front of him.

"We don't have any weekly salaries or annuity, but once we find treasure, or obtain riches from plundering, they'll be distributed according to our ranks. Under normal circumstances, when our luck is still pretty good, the lowest ranking sailor can earn about two to three hundred pounds a year. I heard that this would make one a member of the middle-class on land? Heh heh, if we find the Sunken Laurel, all of us will become tycoons!" the black-cloaked man casually introduced. "According to our ranks, we would get different days off every month, but they can only be accumulated together and done in a staggered fashion."

As he spoke, he suddenly cursed softly.

"Dogsh*t, just the year before, we missed a good chance of finding the Specter Empire because Captain was on holiday!"

Pirates have annual leave? Klein found it somewhat surprising.

He could only feel the pirate crew's comedic intensity from the man's description, reminding him of the humorous Somali pirate recruitment advertisements he had seen in his previous life.

Seeing that Klein appeared shocked by his words, the black cloaked man added with a smile, "As an adventurer, are you still chasing after the powers that transcend nature as told in legends?

"As long as you join us, you'll have a chance to possess them!"

Having said that, he coughed and said, "I forgot to introduce myself."

His expression turned solemn, no longer looking as jocular as he was before.

"Rear Admiral Iceberg Edwina Edwards's subordinate, fourth boatswain of the Golden Dream, Blazing Danitz."

After reporting his title, real name, and identity, Danitz waited patiently for the look of panic and fear to appear on Klein's face.

After a second, he heard the adventurer, who acted somewhat crazily despite looking refined and polite, say in a low voice, "Blazing Danitz with a bounty of 3,000 pounds?"

Danitz was about to reply when he had the illusion that the man standing in the dark alley had turned into an indescribable, hungry monster, salivating over his soul and flesh.

He suddenly clenched his fists; his body no longer as relaxed as it had been earlier. He was so tense that he was trembling slightly.

His intuition told him that he was facing an abyss filled with madness and bloodlust!

In this state, Danitz had no idea how much time had passed until the other party spoke again, "Why are you here?"

"I-I'm on vacation…" Blazing Danitz's dignity made him scorn to answer this question, but his instinct made him spit out the reason.

As soon as he finished speaking, he felt the man retract his gaze, the hunger to gnaw on his flesh and soul disappearing.

He stood where he was and watched as the young adventurer in a black coat and a silk half top hat turn around and walk to the other end of the alley. He stopped when he was about to turn the corner, and turning his head, he asking, "Where's White Shark?"

"H-he lives at 1 Sea Wall Avenue, but he spends most of his time on the second floor of the Flying Fish & Wine. It's no different today," Blazing Danitz answered truthfully.

Only when the figure disappeared into the distance did Danitz straighten his back and take off his cloak.

"What a terrifying fellow…" He sighed silently.

Following that, he found his thoughts and muttered to himself, *I have to inform Captain that there's another terrifying person at sea.*

This is a guy who looks like a gentleman on the outside, but he has a heart like a lunatic's. If one doesn't have the determination and confidence to kill him, it's best not to deal with him.

Danitz pulled up his black cloak's hood and decided to return to the hotel for some sleep. He planned to wait until the telegraph office opened the next morning before relaying the message to his middleman contact in the Rorsted Archipelago.

As for what would happen to White Shark, he didn't care at all.

…

In the corner of another quiet street, Klein stood in the shadows, looking down at the black glove on his left hand.

He found that, although Creeping Hunger had been sealed by Mr. Azik, its thirst for flesh and souls still intrinsically existed and was trying to manifest itself.

Under normal circumstances, Klein wasn't worried that the sealed item would produce any problems, but when he had the urge to kill someone, the corresponding influence he would receive was enough to let that hunger which could lash back at him emanate.

Earlier, when he heard that Danitz was a famous pirate on the bounty list, killing intent instantly rose inwardly out of his yearning desire, causing Creeping Hunger to become as active as a fish in water.

Fortunately, Klein always had good self-control in this aspect. From his words, he was able to judge that he wasn't a pirate who was riddled with sin, so he easily restrained his impulse.

With Creeping Hunger, Gehrman Sparrow's persona will be flawless… Klein paused for a few seconds, took out a gold coin and performed two divinations. First, he divined if Blazing Danitz was lying, and second, if White Shark Hamilton was able to cause harm to him.

The first revelation showed that there was no need for Blazing Danitz to lie, and the second one showed that White Shark Hamilton was unable to cause harm to him.

Klein put away the gold coin, pressed down his hat, and while doing so, he swept his palm down and touched his face.

He instantly changed his appearance—blond hair, blue eyes, and ordinary facial features!

Then, Klein unbuttoned his overcoat and pulled up the inner shirt so that it was no longer stuffed into his trousers.

After a simple change of his attire, Klein, who didn't carry a cane, began sweating. His lips were dry as he identified the direction and headed back to the Flying Fish & Wine bar!

On the way, he met Blazing Danitz again. The man only glanced at him once before withdrawing his gaze and headed for the hotel opposite the bar.

After inspecting the bounty wall, Klein calmly reached out with his hand, pushed open the door and walked in.

At this moment, it had been less than ten minutes since he escaped.

In the bar, most of the customers had dispersed, but there were still a lot of drunkards gathered here to watch the show.

Their eyes swept over the new guest, but they all withdrew it soon after, and Klein made his way unimpeded to the bar counter.

He saw the bartender standing with frightened eyes beside a fat man; his forehead heavily bandaged with white bandages, his nostrils stuffed with tissue paper, and his face was bruised.

The fatty was tall and big. His skin was fair and he looked like a big white shark that had swam itself ashore.

He touched his shiny bald head and said to Elland, who was wearing a dark red jacket and a straight sword, "Someone told me that you know that guy?

"There are only three passenger ships that docked today, so there won't be many unfamiliar outsiders. Don't try to lie!"

Elland patted the hilt of his sword and smiled casually.

"Yes, he is my passenger.

"But the problem today clearly stemmed from your people."

"So I just want him to come back here, apologize to me, and compensate me for the damage done to the bar," the tall, big-sized white fatty said with a frown.

Elland laughed and said, "White Shark, I have a proverb from my hometown: 'don't hate wild dogs that pass by just because of the rats in the storehouse.'"

“…Just Elland, is this your answer?" White Shark Hamilton narrowed his eyes.

Elland gripped the wooden handle of the musket, took a step forward, and said with a deep voice, "Yes, this is my answer!"

*Captain sure has his way of doing things… *Klein was slightly surprised at Elland's response.

After staring at each other for a few seconds, White Shark Hamilton took in a deep breath.

"You've helped me before, so I don't need an apology. However, he must compensate half of my losses, and you will be the one to pass them on."

"Good suggestion." Elland smiled.

White Shark Hamilton's face darkened as he looked around.

He suddenly threw out his hand, slapping the bartender in the face.

The bartender flew out, all his teeth dropping to the floor.

Klein quietly watched from five meters away, as if none of this had anything to do with him.

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CHAPTER 500 INTERROGATING WHITE SHARK

Bam!

The bartender fell to the ground, writhing in pain.

White Shark Hamilton snorted and didn't say anything. He turned around and walked towards the second floor, stepping on the creaking wooden stairs.

After the excitement was over, the drunkards dispersed one by one. Unaffected, Captain Elland and the others returned upstairs to continue playing cards.

Klein took the opportunity to follow.

He returned to Flying Fish & Wine, not to deal with White Shark who didn't pose any threat to him but rather to simply get more information from the owner of the bar, who was connected to many pirate factions. After all, he had named his new identity Gehrman, which secretly implied hunting pirates whose hands were stained with blood. He planned on using their souls, flesh, and Beyonder characteristics to replace the souls in Creeping Hunger who were awaiting their release.

There was no gas in Damir Harbor, and the corridor on the second floor was relatively dark. The brass candle stands that were inlaid into each wall flickered and dimmed.

Klein observed the surroundings as he wiped his face, silently transforming into one of the bouncers on the first floor.

He used Illusion Creation to compensate for his mismatched attire.

After finishing his preparations, he walked towards the room that his spiritual intuition identified as belonging to White Shark Hamilton.

He first passed the card room, but he didn't attract anyone's attention.

He stopped in front of the bouncers who were guarding the corridor and said in a low voice, "There's something going on downstairs again."

"Holy Lord of Storms, what's happening tonight?" A bouncer sighed.

"I hope those beautiful people don't get hurt," another guard said worriedly.

He was referring to the whores who got their business in the bar.

"They're fine." Klein stepped past the bouncers and knocked on White Shark's door.

"Who is it?" Hamilton warily asked.

"Boss, it's me. Something happened downstairs again!" Klein remembered the information he gleaned while watching the commotion and deliberately hoarsened his voice.

"Damn it!" Hamilton bellowed, "Come in and explain to me what happened!"

Klein turned the doorknob and walked in.

When he closed the door, he dispelled the illusion, and the muscles on his face rapidly squirmed, returning to his previous identity—a new customer with blond hair, blue eyes, and ordinary facial features.

"You…” Hamilton was stunned for a moment before he immediately opened his mouth wide in an attempt to shout loudly.

At the same time, many illusory fish scales surfaced on the back of his hand, his originally large and fat body burgeoning.

Suddenly, his heart began to beat faster, and a strong instinctive fear seized him by the throat.

At this moment, he felt that the stranger standing by the door was a demon that had been starved for many days, repeatedly examining his flesh and soul with an ice-cold, craving look in his eyes.

All of a sudden, White Shark Hamilton was gripped by an extreme panic, and he failed to effectively respond.

Klein slowly walked to the sofa and sat down. He politely smiled.

"Now, can we talk calmly?"

The feeling of being stared at by a horrifying monster suddenly disappeared. Hamilton relaxed all of a sudden while his body shriveled up a lot like a punctured balloon.

He didn't rashly cry for help as he asked with beads of sweat lining his forehead, "Who are you? What do you want?"

"A hunter," Klein answered casually, "I heard that you're connected to a number of pirate factions. I would like to know their respective situations."

"No, I'm not…” White Shark Hamilton subconsciously denied.

He immediately felt the extreme hunger again, and he felt as if the man's eyes were dyed with a dark red layer.

Klein inwardly deliberated over his persona and said with a gentlemanly smile, "You have two choices.

"One is to answer frankly. The second is to be killed by me and then answer honestly."

Killing to channel my spirit? White Shark Hamilton had heard of similar rumors. He swallowed hard and asked, "Why do you want to know about any of this?"

Klein smiled and answered, "I'm a hunter, so I'm chasing after bounties."

Hamilton suddenly felt that the man's polite smile was tinged with an indescribable madness, and he couldn't help but blurt out, "Are… Are you mad?

"I've seen many similar adventurers, but all of them have been buried at the bottom of the sea!

"It's not hard to kill a lone pirate, but can you defend against any further retaliation? The whores in the bar or the seemingly ordinary customers might all be pirate informants! Your friendly accomplice could be bribed at any moment and you'll be shot in the back! The pirates will gather information in advance and surround your ship. Can you protect all the passengers? Can you survive a cannon bombardment? On the sea where there's no room to run, how are you going to survive?"

After venting the horror in his heart in one breath, he saw the man, who called himself a hunter, reveal a gentle and kind smile.

"Just have them all killed, and then there won't be such a problem."

A true madman… White Shark Hamilton immediately took a deep breath and said, "I'm in contact with many pirates, but it's a passive relationship. They need to sell the cash, jewelry, and goods that they plundered in exchange for alcohol, food, fresh water, weapons, and women's comfort.

This has to happen through me, but I can only wait here for them. I don't know where their ships pass or where they're going."

"What else?" Klein asked calmly.

His reply just now was mainly to scare White Shark. As for having revenge sought on him by the pirates, he wasn't worried at all. As a Faceless, he might as well find a place to drown himself at the bottom of the sea if they could find him so easily.

And… White Shark Hamilton's throat moved, without immediately giving an affirmative or negative description.

He tightly closed his mouth and looked at the gentleman in the half top hat. The gentleman's eyes were calm and reserved, as though madness was brewing within him.

The uneasy silence was like the calm sea surface before a storm, gently resounding, colliding, and fermenting.

Finally, Hamilton shifted his gaze away and placed his hand on the desk in frustration.

"Yes, I'm still gathering information for them. If there's any urgent information, I'll use the radio transceiver they gave me to alert them."

White Shark didn't dare to take the risk and was afraid that the man possessed unique Beyonder powers that could determine if he was speaking the truth or if he was saying the whole truth.

"Radio transceiver?" Klein, who had succeeded in laying his bets, sharply caught onto a noun.

"That's what they call it when speaking to me. It's like a telegram, but it doesn't require a wire." Hamilton turned and walked over to the gray safe and squatted down.

A wireless telegraph? The pirates possess such advanced technology? Klein could vaguely guess what the radio transceiver was.

He had previously thought of inventing something like this, but when he flipped through relevant magazines, he realized that wireless telegrams had long since appeared. However, it hadn't found its place in the commercial world. The Berserk Sea, which separated the Northern and Southern Continents with its constant thunder and lightning, the chaotic magnetic field, and violent storms, made only a few sea routes accessible. Even if one was equipped with wireless telegraphs, they were almost useless. Similarly, the weather in the Fog Sea and the Sonia Sea had changed drastically, and there were a number of factors that affected electromagnetic transmission. The use of wireless telegrams had been severely restricted.

Could it be that there's an enhanced model that can solve some of those problems? Klein watched as White Shark pried open the floor plank in front of the safe and twisted a mechanism to reveal a secret door in the wall.

Behind the secret door was a hidden cabinet with three levels. On the top level were some documents and bills, a revolver, a new type of half-arm gun, and other weapons, while the bottom layer was filled with complicated black machinery.

With just a glance, Klein deduced from his previous life's impression and the information he had gathered previously, that the mechanical construct belonged to a radio transceiver.

"That's what they call it. It's called a radio transceiver. The news it transmits can be received by similar items as far as the Rorsted Archipelago. Any further and it'll depend on the weather and one's luck. Usually, it's very troublesome and limited." Hamilton didn't know much about the machine, and he was vaguely describing the corresponding situation based on his experiences using it and what he had been taught.

It's better than the new radio transceivers that are now being commercialized… I wonder who invented it… Klein quietly listened and

asked, "Who are they?"

He made himself look like a bounty hunter who didn't understand technology.

White Shark Hamilton wiped the cold sweat off his forehead and said, "Silver Coin Viper Oder who claims to serve the owner of the Dawn, as well as the intelligence officer of Admiral of Blood, Old Quinn. They appeared together, and I can't be certain if they're working together. Of course, Oder has always only made claims."

The owner of the Dawn, that Queen Mystic? Klein looked away, a gold coin appearing in his hand.

The gold coin kept weaving between his fingers before finally leaping into the air and landing. It left White Shark puzzled as he trembled in fear and trepidation.

Lowering his head to take a glance, Klein slowly stood up.

At this moment, he suddenly asked, "Who gave you the potion?"

"O-Old Quinn…" Hamilton hesitated but still chose to answer honestly.

Klein nodded and no longer asked. He turned and walked towards the door.

Thud! The wooden door opened and closed. The figure wearing a black coat disappeared from White Shark's room.

Hamilton held his breath, waited for more than ten seconds, and finally let out a long sigh.

He quickly wiped the sweat from his face, placed the radio receiver on the desk, flipped through a codebook, and hurriedly sent a telegram into the distance:

"I was targeted!

"By an unfamiliar fellow!"

Beside the completely engrossed Hamilton, Klein had his hands in his pockets as he quietly watched, taking in the entire frequency spectrum and the passcodes.

His departure just now was just a large-scale magic show, more than enough to deal with a Low-Sequence Beyonder like White Shark's Sailor pathway.

As for the question of whether or not he would be able to remember the details later, a Seer didn't need to worry over it. A dream divination was enough to recall everything.

Admiral of Blood and his men enjoy killing and love blood. They're passionate about enacting violence against women. Every time they rob a passenger ship, they would always cause a tragedy… This is public information known by everyone, and they themselves were proud of it. They're never stingy with their proclamations… The target of the hunt and the risk involved—

I'll give priority to them… Klein thought for a moment and then prepared to leave the room while Hamilton tidied and put away the radio transceiver.

He didn't plan on dealing with White Shark for the time being, as he was afraid of disturbing the real prey. Anyways, this kind of fellow who was on land with a fixed territory could be easily dealt with in a letter later since he had dirt on him.

Klein's soundless footsteps caused the door to slowly open and then quietly close, bringing in a slight cool breeze.

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